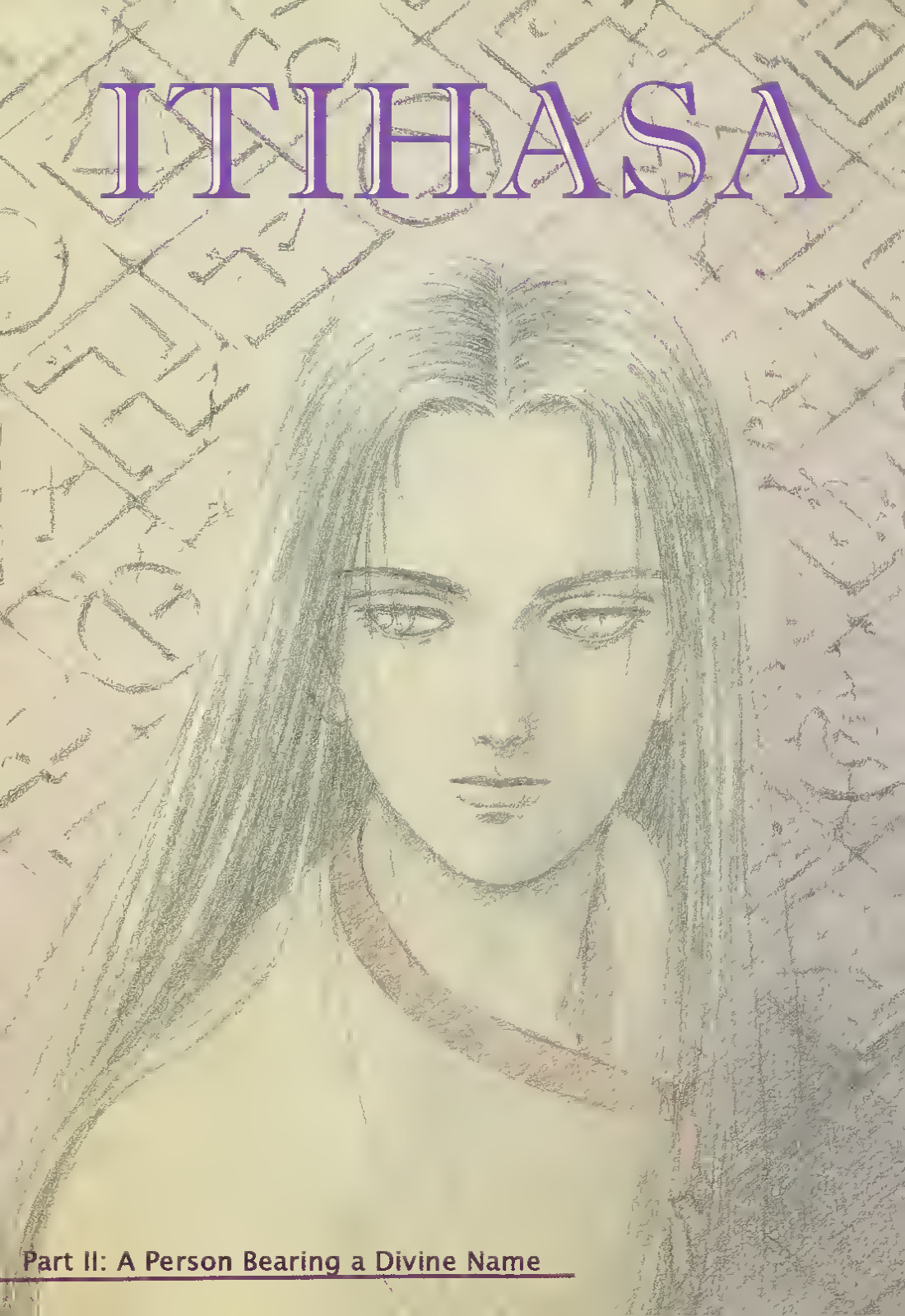
Itihasa 4

Wakako Mizuki

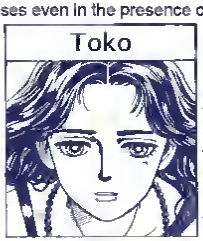
ITIHASA

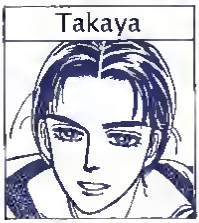


Part II: A Person Bearing a Divine Name

Part I Recap & Main Characters

Because of her destiny, Toko is sent down the river as soon as she is born. She is found by seven-year-old Takaya as if they had called out to each other, and Toko is raised as his sister. Takaya's tribe follows the gods that cannot be seen. They are peaceful people who use the wisdom received from these gods (mantras, yang stones, the power of nature, etc.) as the foundation for their lives. Two generations ago, an oracle foretold: "The two great continents will be reduced to dust and then, after a great flood, gods that can be seen will appear in foreign lands everywhere, and the world will fall into chaos." Despite this ominous prophecy, Toko grows into a vibrant, kind-hearted girl under the affectionate care of Takaya. Seven years later, however, the prophesy comes true. The Kiyu Faction—a group of demon gods and warriors under Kiyu the Silver Horned God—attacks Toko's tribe. The children are kidnapped, and everyone else is killed. Takaya, Toko, and Aohiko (a man Takaya looks up to as an older brother and teacher) escape the danger while on a trip to the mountains to look for a yang stone. But they are soon surrounded by Risson, God of the True Law, and his warriors (Katsura, Ichirota, etc.) who are in pursuit of the demon gods, and there is friction between them due to the difference in the gods they follow. The gods that can be seen are divided into (benevolent) demigods and (evil) demon gods. It seems they are locked in a life-or-death struggle that has taken them to this island country in search of the wisdom of the gods that cannot be seen. Before long, Aohiko and Ichirota get into a clash over the sacred treasures handed down in Takaya's tribe (a magatama necklace, a mirror, and a sword). On the one hand, Ichirota shows animosity toward Aohiko, who does not approve of using force or flinch before a sword, while on the other, he is plagued by his past as a warrior under Kiyu. Acting as a buffer between the two, Katsura also harbors hostility toward Aohiko but is attracted to his indescribable charm before she even realizes it. Though repulsed by the violent Ichirota, Takaya decides he must become strong to protect Toko—a likely target for the demon gods due to her potential for becoming an oracle—and hopes to join Risson's group. Aohiko was planning to part ways with the group and embark on a journey to spread the wisdom of the gods that cannot be seen, but Risson uses his psychic power to make Aohiko believe he has decided to go with them of his own free will. Risson desires Aohiko's knowledge and strong will, which keeps him from losing his senses even in the presence of the god. During a journey, Toko and Aohiko are attacked by a lone demon god in the forest for Toko, is critically wounded by under the manipulative influence of the calls him by his former name (Nachi). Risson just in the nick of time. To save taught by Aohiko. Although his life is him, leaving her in a deathlike state. As her—which she has previously become. But the other Toko tells her that they are. Risson finds Aohiko dying at the foot of. posedly ineffective against human. half-healed wounds on his back a few. in love with him. Ever tormented by his. deepens as he perceives her feelings. years prevents him from getting close to. to conceal her feelings and protect. Thanks to the training of Ichirota and. men, and Toko into a beautiful, lithe. by everyone—especially the opposite. a hermit called Misen that the secrets. sacred mountain to the east, and Mt. own in search of Mt. Fuji. Thanks to Misen's ability to look into the past, Toko learns she has a twin who was kidnapped as a child and has become one of Kiyu's warriors. Takaya is unfailingly kind to Toko in her state of shock, but Toko has developed feelings for him as time has passed, and his brotherly kindness is only painful for her. She has known for a long time that he is not her real brother. Upset at the appearance of a young woman named Kiriko, Toko finally confesses to Takaya that she has "always been in love" with him, knowing full well that he—the person who raised her—doesn't see her as anything more than a sister. This creates a rift between the two. As he worries about this situation, Aohiko learns that Misen has seen something just like their sacred mirror in a small village that lies beyond four mountains. Aohiko decides to take a trip there while Risson is away. Although Toko had planned to go with Misen, Aohiko and Katsura, Kiriko's death from an illness changes her mind, and she decides to stay and become self-reliant. On her first night alone, she decides to hide her feelings for Takaya and try to make a fresh start as his sister. At dawn, she visits Kiriko's grave. Worried about her safety, Takaya follows her there. As soon as Toko sees him, she is overwhelmed by her feelings and clings to him in tears. The more Toko and Takaya realize how much they need each other, the harder it becomes for them to draw closer or farther apart. At this point, both Toko and Takaya sense the presence of the approaching demon gods at almost the same time—"It's that girl! That girl is getting closer! "Toko and her twin must not meet. . . They are destined to kill each other if they do. And now, they are about to cross paths.

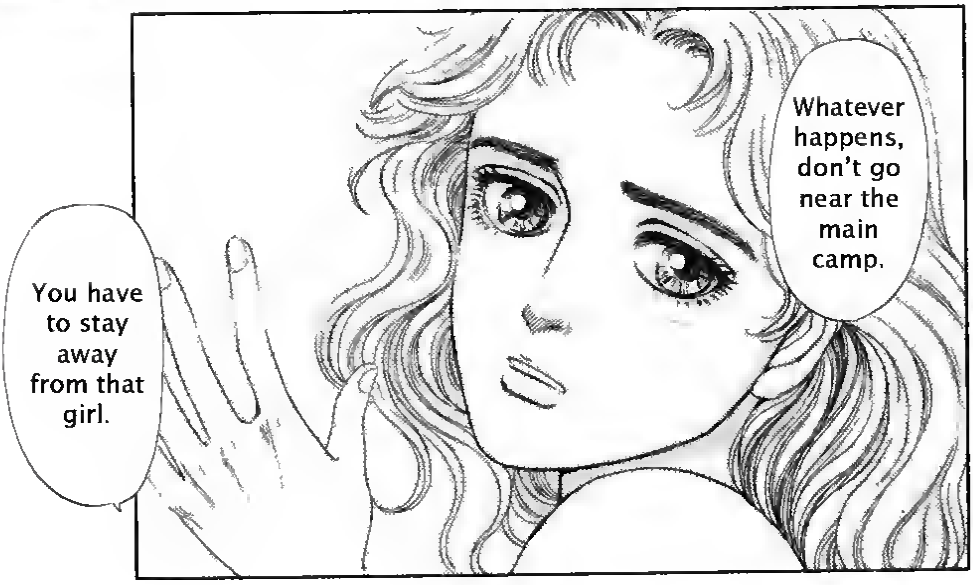




Aohiko falls off a cliff, and Takaya, who goes out looking. Koma and his friends (Takaya's rivals in the youth group). demon god. After Ichirota rushes to the scene, the god and tempts him to return to Kiyu, but he is saved by. Takaya's life, Toko starts chanting a mantra she was. saved, the mantra works by transferring her life force to. Toko drifts between life and death, another version of. aware of—appears before her and guides her toward life. destined to kill each other if they meet again. Meanwhile, the cliff from which he fell. Although Risson's power is sup-. affliction, Aohiko regains consciousness and returns with. days later. Aohiko's survival makes Katsura realize she is. unrequited love for Katsura. Ichirota's hatred for Aohiko. Meanwhile, a grim fate that awaits Aohiko after a few. women. After he tells Katsura about it, she secretly vows. Aohiko until the day she dies. Over seven years go by. Katsura, Takaya has grown into a strong, tough young. young women. Vibrant and courageous, Takaya is adored. sex—which distresses Toko. One day, Risson learns from. of the gods that cannot be seen may lie in Mt. Fuji, a. Towada, to the north of Mt. Fuji. Risson then flies off on his.

We're not supposed to meet.
If we meet again...
...I'll kill you!

Stay here!

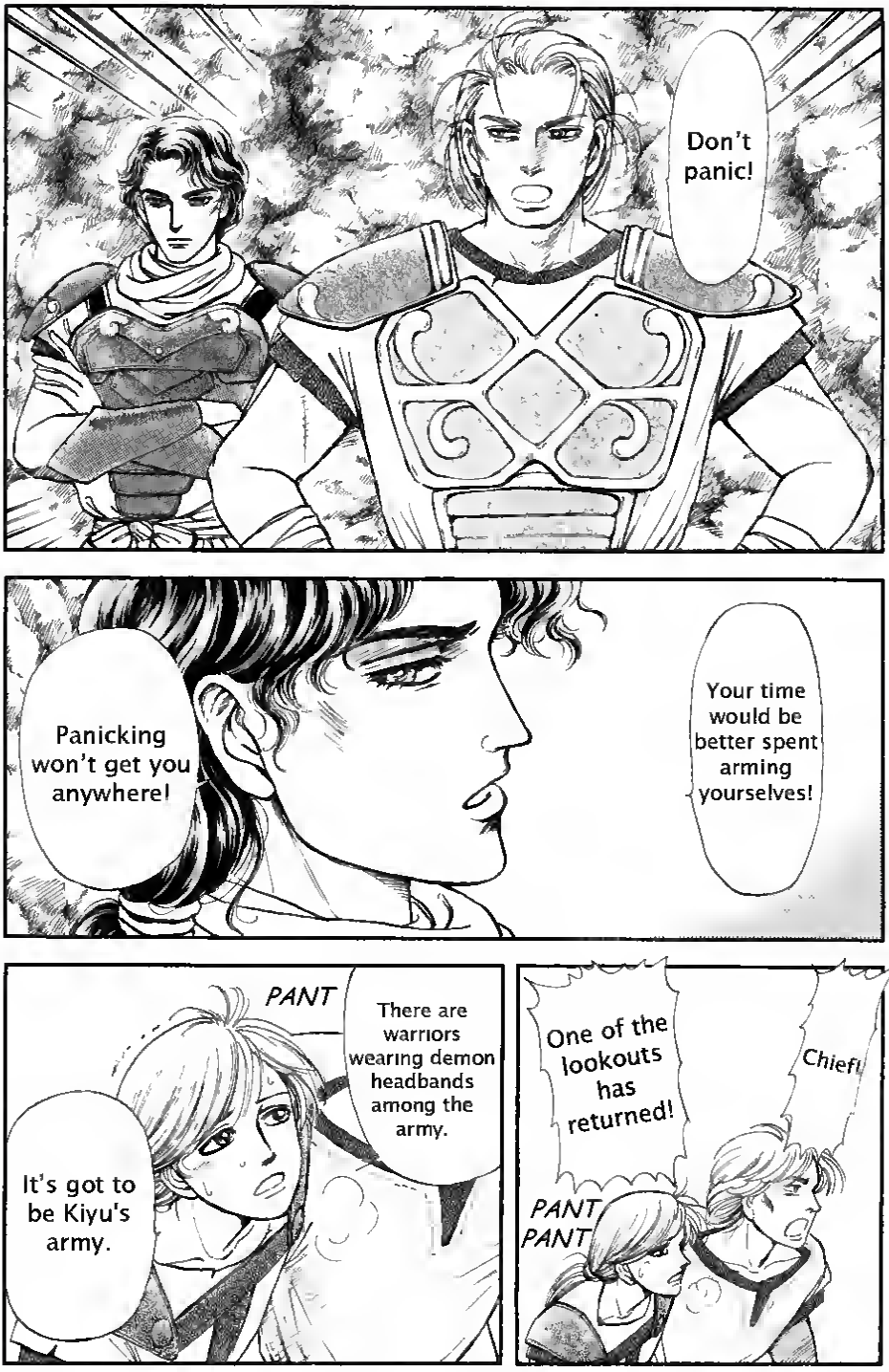

Whatever happens, don't go near the main camp.
You have to stay away from that girl.

Climb up this tree and don't make a sound until it's over.
Okay !?
But Takaya ...!
No ifs, ands, or buts!
Do as I say—just for today!
Up the tree!
Taka -ya!

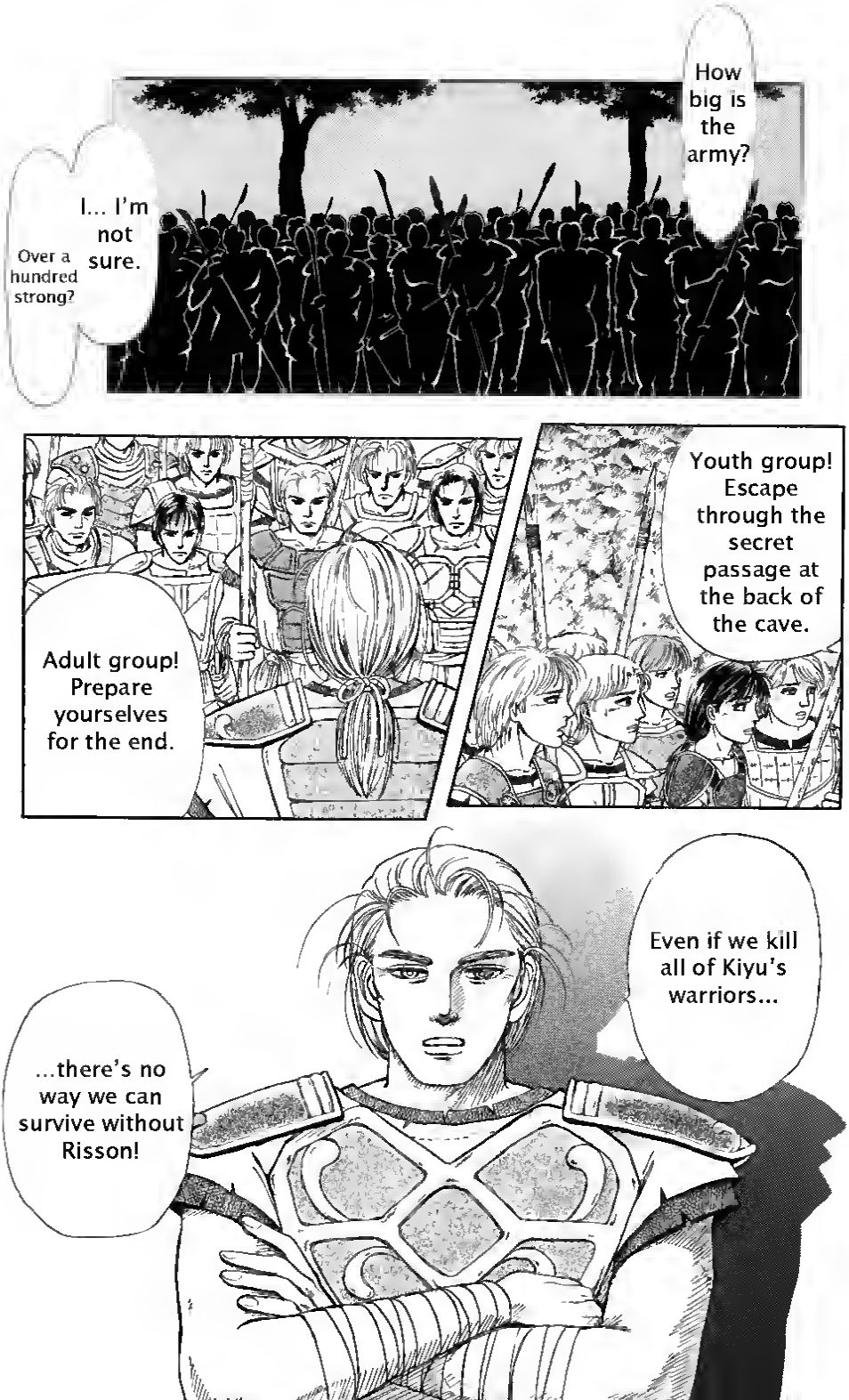
Don't worry !
Taka -ya!
I'll find her and rescue her... You can count on it!

We're being surrounded by demon-god warriors!
Demon gods!

I guess they've all been killed. None of them has returned!
What happened to the lookouts!?
PANT
PANT
Just when Risson isn't with us...
T- Takaya's not here ...
What !?
...and we don't have Katsura either!
Without Takaya...
Where have they gone!?
Neither is Toko!


Don't panic!
Panicking won't get you anywhere!
Your time would be better spent arming yourselves!
PANT
There are warriors wearing demon headbands among the army.
It's got to be Kiyu's army.
One of the lookouts has returned!
Chief!
PANT
PANT

It's Kiyu ...
K- Kiyu ...!
Takaya will be back!
PANT
PANT
Ta... Takaya and Toko were...
...headed to the grave of the girl who... just died...


How big is the army?
I... I'm not sure.
Over a hundred strong?
Youth group! Escape through the secret passage at the back of the cave.
Adult group! Prepare yourselves for the end.
Even if we kill all of Kiyu's warriors...
...there's no way we can survive without Risson!

Our final task today is to kill as many of the enemy as possible.
Every warrior with a demon headband we fail to finish off will claim the lives of dozens of men.
We need survivors to carry on our goal!
And you'd just get in the way.
I'll fight, too!
Chief! I'll fight with you. I don't want to run away!
Me too!
Me too!

Pick up Toko on your way.
I've chosen you because your eyes and ears are sharper than most.
So I'd get in your way too?
Chi-ef!
Koma! I'm putting you in charge of the youth group.
...and if they meet ...
That she has a twin... and her twin became one of Kiyu's warriors...
Is that story about Toko really true?
Chief ...
They're almost here!
Go now!
RAAAAH
アアアア
Don't stick around to find out!

One guy against many!
Some-one's fighting them!
Takaya's returned!
It's Takaya!
DASH
ダッ
YAAAH!
Follow his lead!
Chief!
Fare-well!

SLA
SH
RUSH

CLANG
Let's go! We need to survive so we can get stronger and fight the next time!
That's Takaya!
Who's that incredibly strong guy!?

That's the traitor Nachi—I mean Ichirota!
And that fierce swordsman over there!?
So the skilled fighter at the center is Chief Yoshikage!
Where!?

Where is she!?

If Toko's twin gets wounded in this battle, Toko will get wounded too!
If her twin dies, Toko...

...Toko might die too!
Before that happens...!

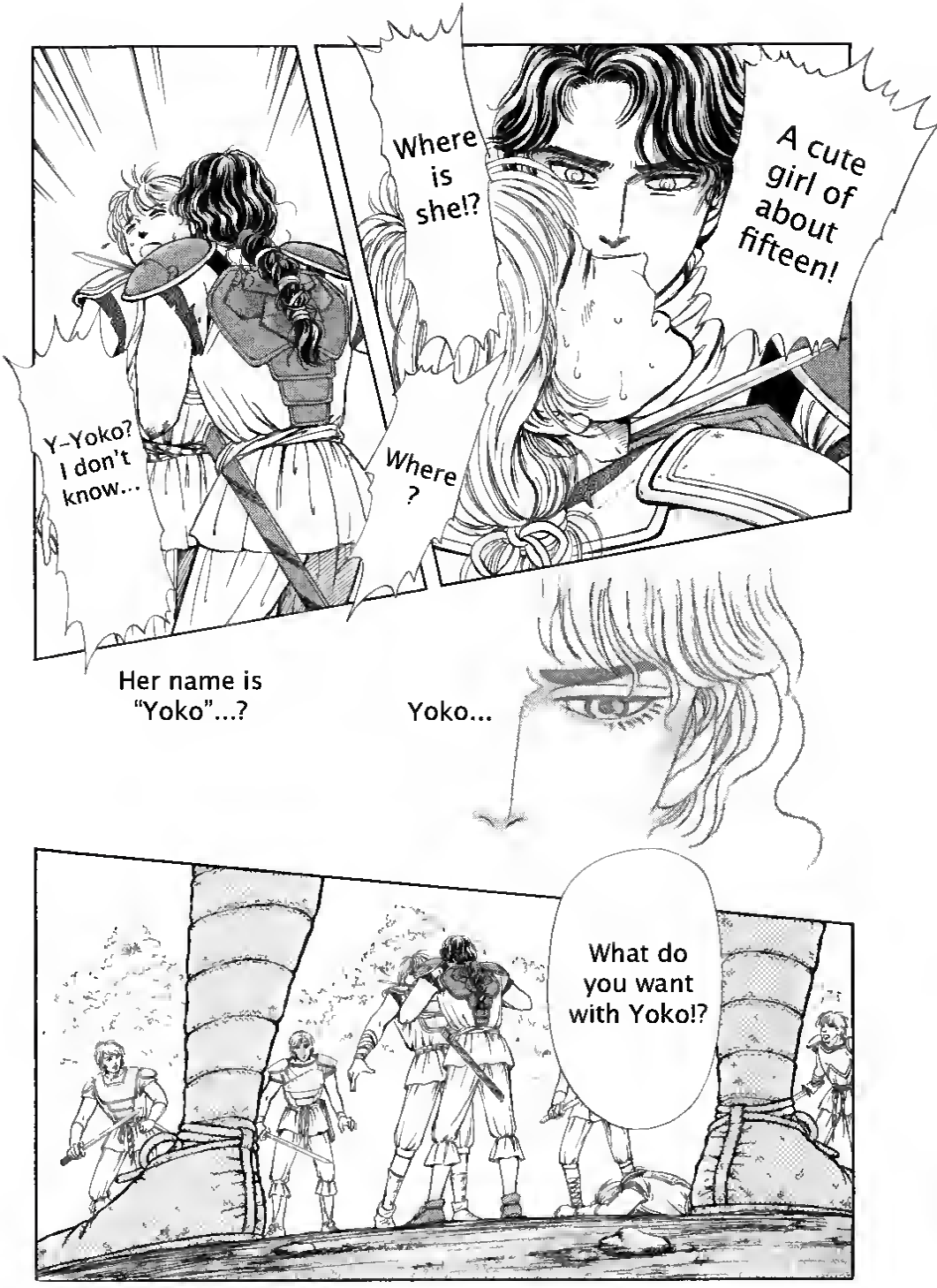
So you're Takaya.
RUSH
Before that happens...!
I will kill you and become famous!
What's it to you?
RUSHHH
Shut up!
What are you going to do with fame!?

CLANG
Why ...
...do you want to fight !?
FWISH
Those who wish to kill...
FWISH
Why do you want to kill!?
SLASH
...can't com-plain if...

...they are killed by the sword!
SPURT
THUD
I guess once you die...
...you can't complain anyway.
HYAAH!
SWISH
UNH
Huh ?
He cut him down...
...with a s-swish?

I am Takaya!
If you want to die, bring it!

BAM
They're the only ones who can take that guy on!
Call Hibiki and Kyoji!
Aa-aah!
You have a girl wearing a demon headband, right!?


A cute girl of about fifteen!
Where is she!?
Where ?
Y-Yoko? I don't know...
Her name is "Yoko"...?
Yoko...
What do you want with Yoko!?

If you kill him, Kiyu will be pleased!
Kyoji! That's the traitor.
If you want to meet Yoko, I can arrange it.
But I can only bring your head to see her.

SLASH
Come and get it!
RUSH

Still...

We're still going to meet...
I'm sure...
...we'll meet.
The more I think about not calling to her...
...the more we call out to each other.

Don't worry about me...

...if this is my destiny.

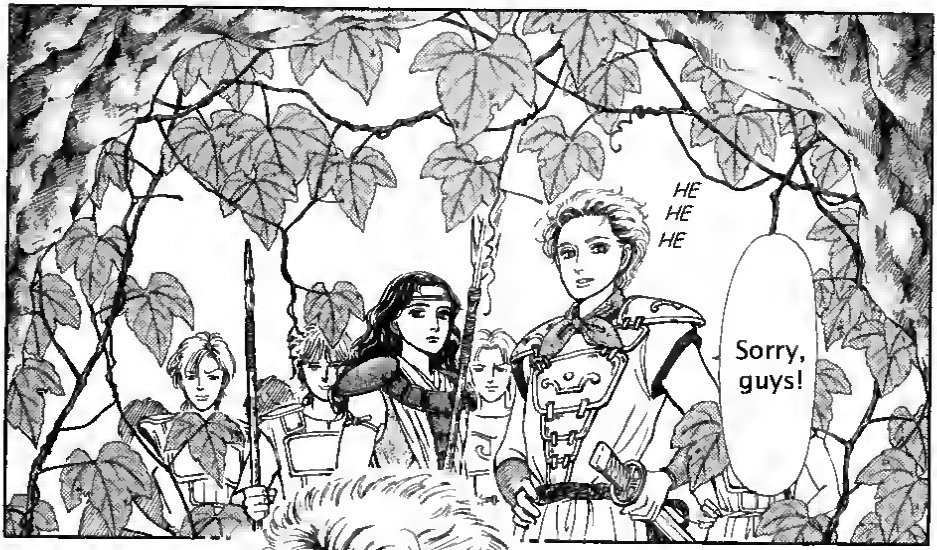
CLANK
Y-Yoko isn't here.
SLASH
I-I did it!
CLANG
CLANG

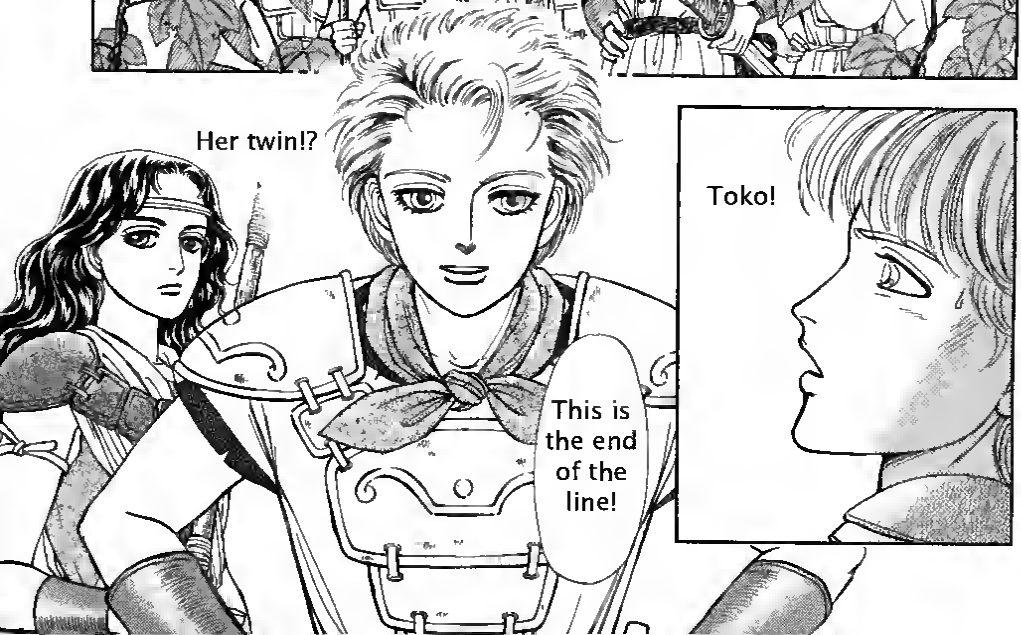
If you can't tell me where this "Yoko" is, I'll kill you!
WHOA!
What!? Ambush?

We've got trouble!
Takaya!
I had Koma take the youth group out the secret passage, but...
...the exit was identified—it seems another group is lying in wait for them there!
Another group!?
That's probably where Toko's twin is!

Toko is...
...near that exit.
DASH
DASH
Go now!
Chief!
Go!

You're all...
...
... dead meat!


HE
HE
HE
Sorry, guys!


Her twin!?
This is the end of the line!
Toko!

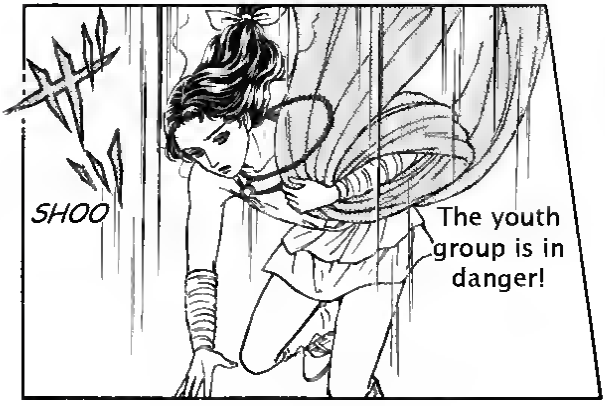
No doubt about it! If it weren't for the demon headband, I couldn't tell them apart!
No! That's her twin!
Oh ...
Is that T-Toko !?

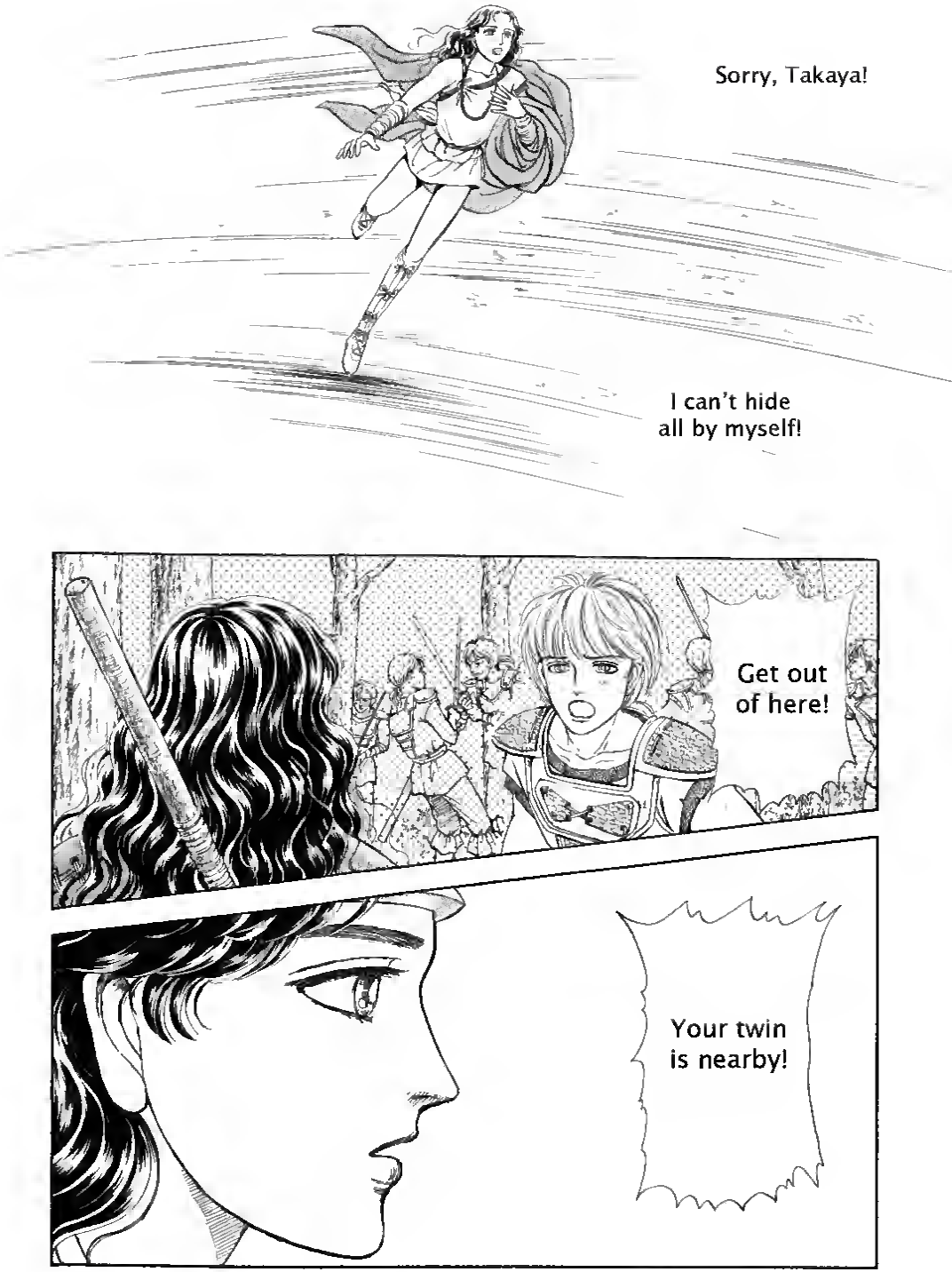
We're gonna have to fight!
Listen. I don't have time to go into detail, but don't hurt Toko's twin.
If she's wounded, Toko will be wounded too! If she dies, Toko may die too!
What are you guys doing!?
Hurry up and come out!
Put your survival first.
It's okay to run away.
If you escape, let Risson, Aohiko, and Katsura know what happened.
We've been waiting for everyone to come out!
Would you rather we hack you up one by one as you exit!?

DASH
Get 'em!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

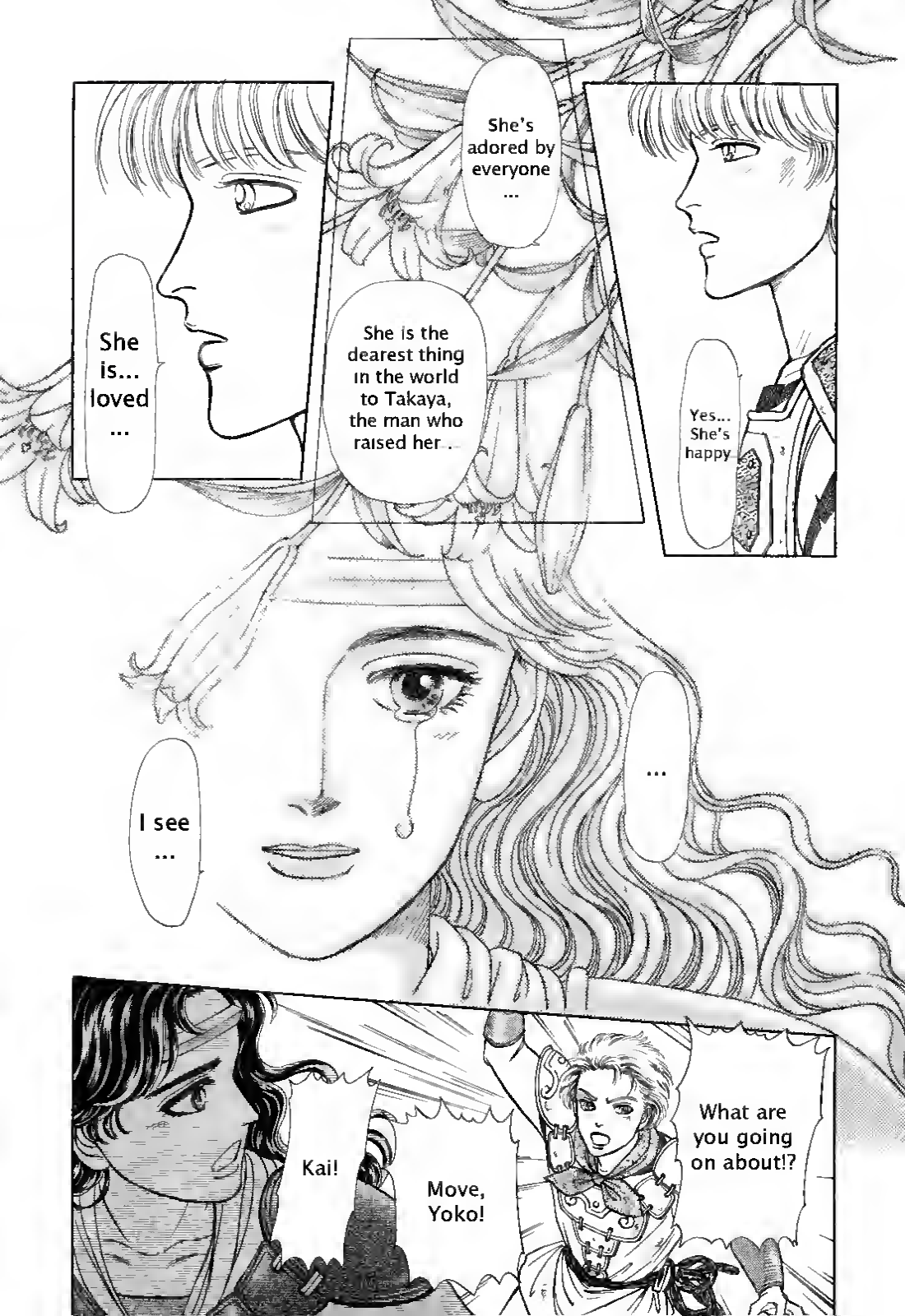
The clash of swords!

Over by the secret passage!

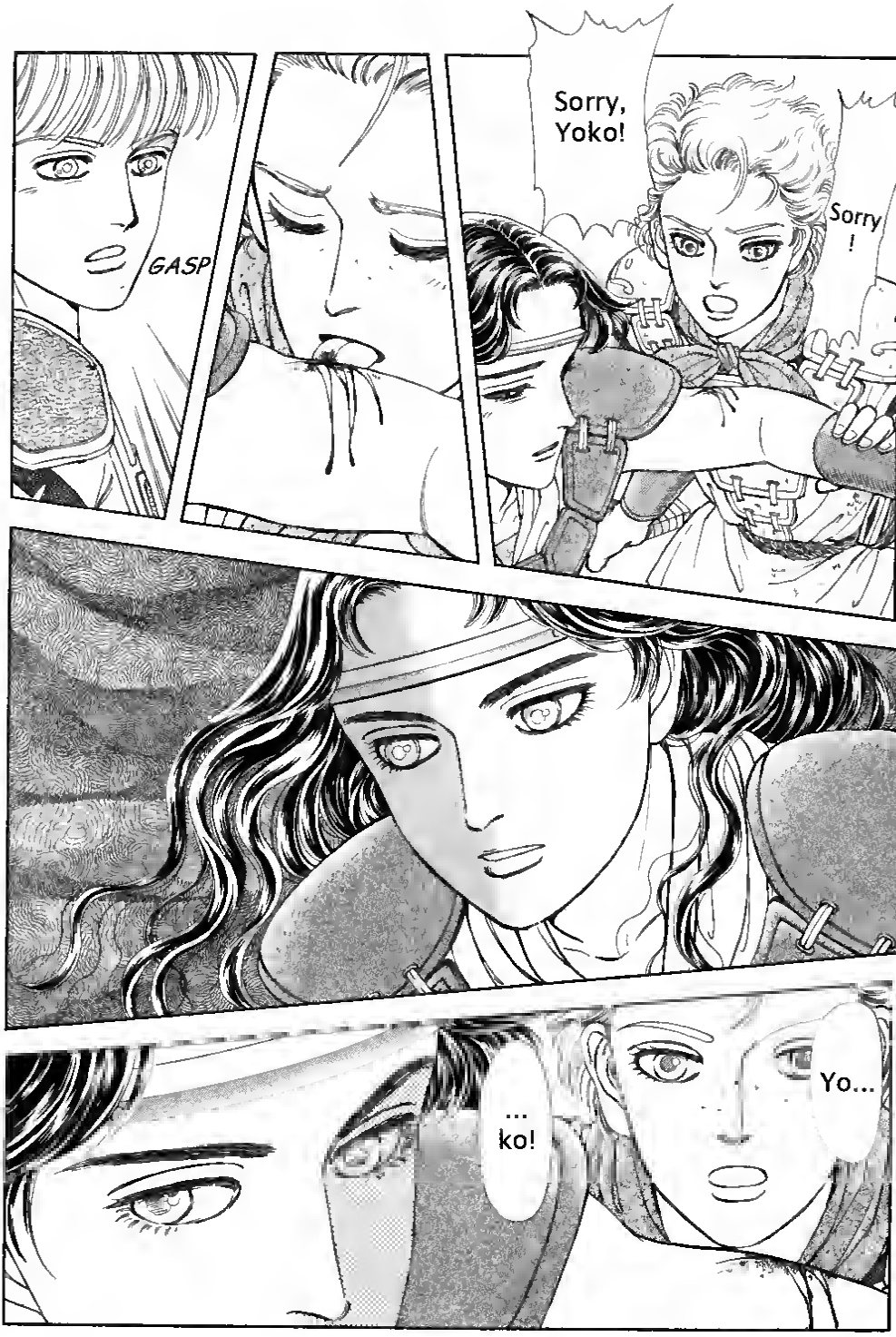

SHOO
The youth group is in danger!


Sorry, Takaya!
I can't hide all by myself!
Get out of here!
Your twin is nearby!

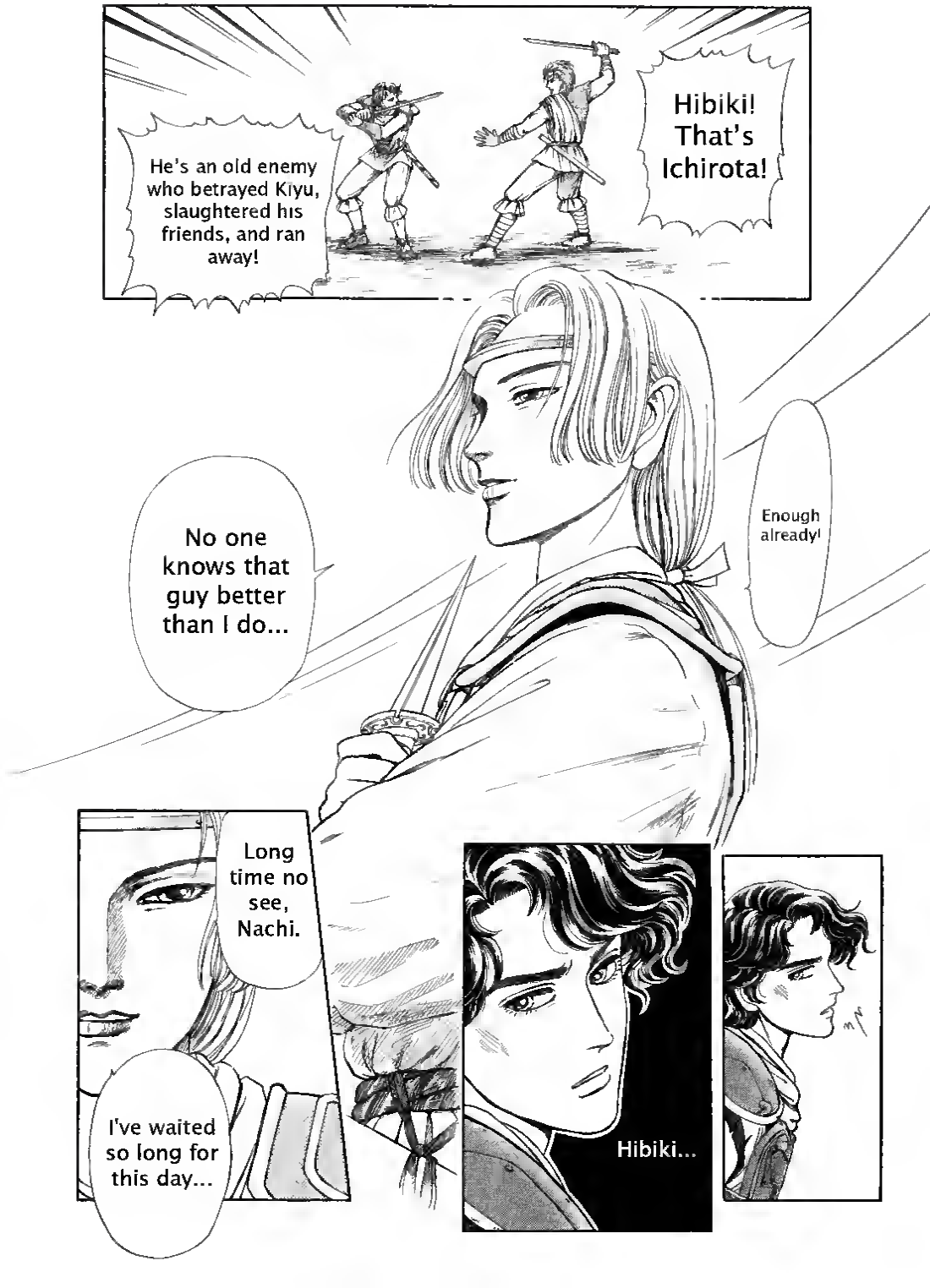
You know, right!?
You under-stand?
You two must never meet!
...
Is...
... Toko ...
... happy ?


She's adored by everyone ...
She is the dearest thing in the world to Takaya, the man who raised her.
She is... loved ...
Yes... She's happy
...
I see ...
What are you going on about!?
Move, Yoko!
Kai!

CLANG
Stop! Kai!
CLANG
CLANG
SLICE
!!
A... ck


GASP
Sorry, Yoko!
Sorry !
Yo...
... ko!

HE HE HE
Now no one can stop Yoko.
Stop ...
The demon head-band...!
SWISH
I can't kill you!
Stop!
SWISH
Not when you're her twin!
Not when you've got Toko's face!

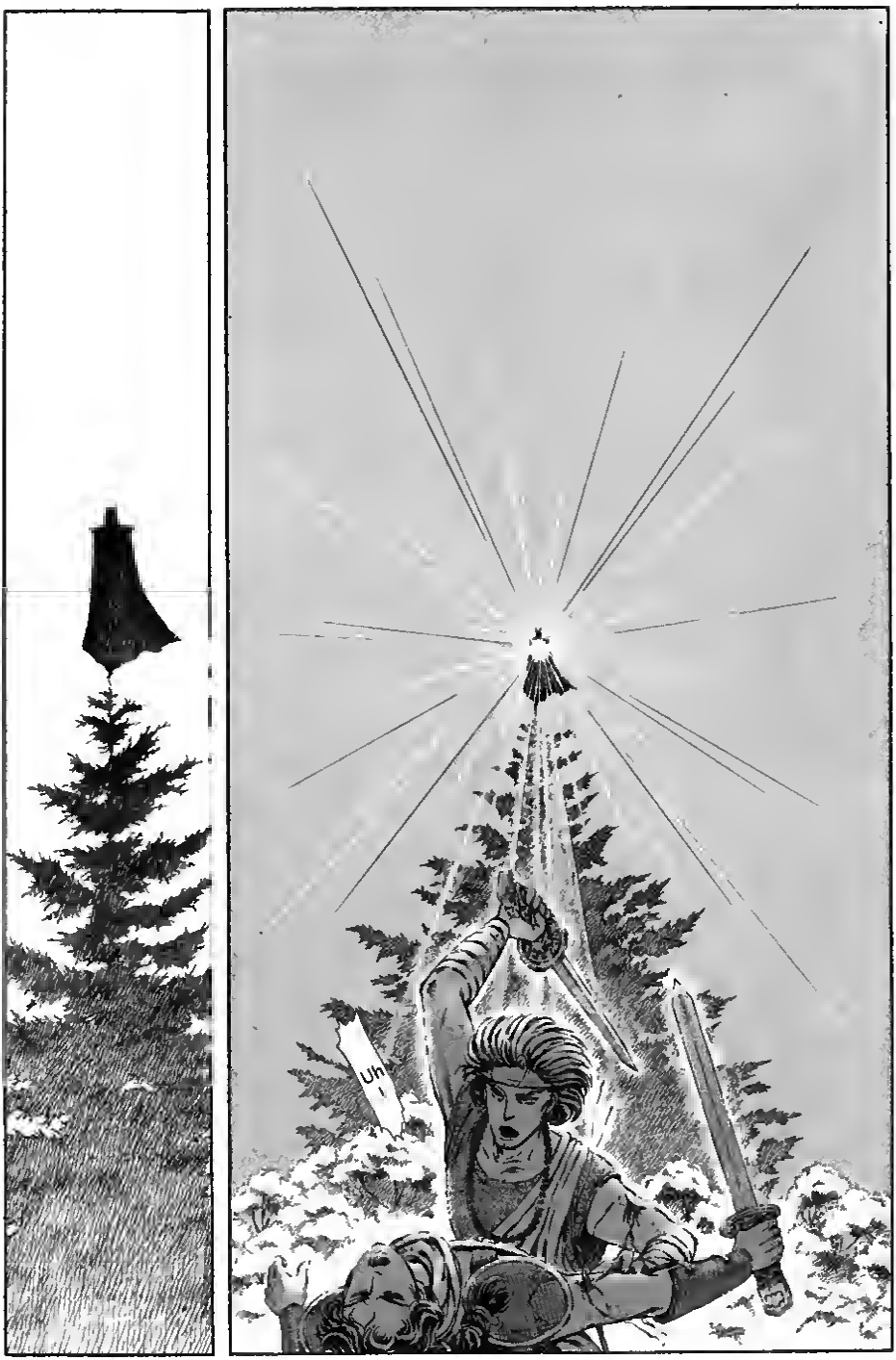

He's an old enemy who betrayed Kiyu, slaughtered his friends, and ran away!
Hibiki! That's Ichirota!
Enough already!
No one knows that guy better than I do...
Long time no see, Nachi.
I've waited so long for this day...
Hibiki...

Don't you get it? His sword is telling you that he'll kill you in one stroke.
He isn't as skilled as they say! He hasn't even grazed me!
Hibiki! Don't bother.
PANT PANT
He's not panting or sweating... His skill far surpasses his reputation.
If he just grazes you and triggers the headband, he'll get himself into trouble...
Huh ...
You don't say...

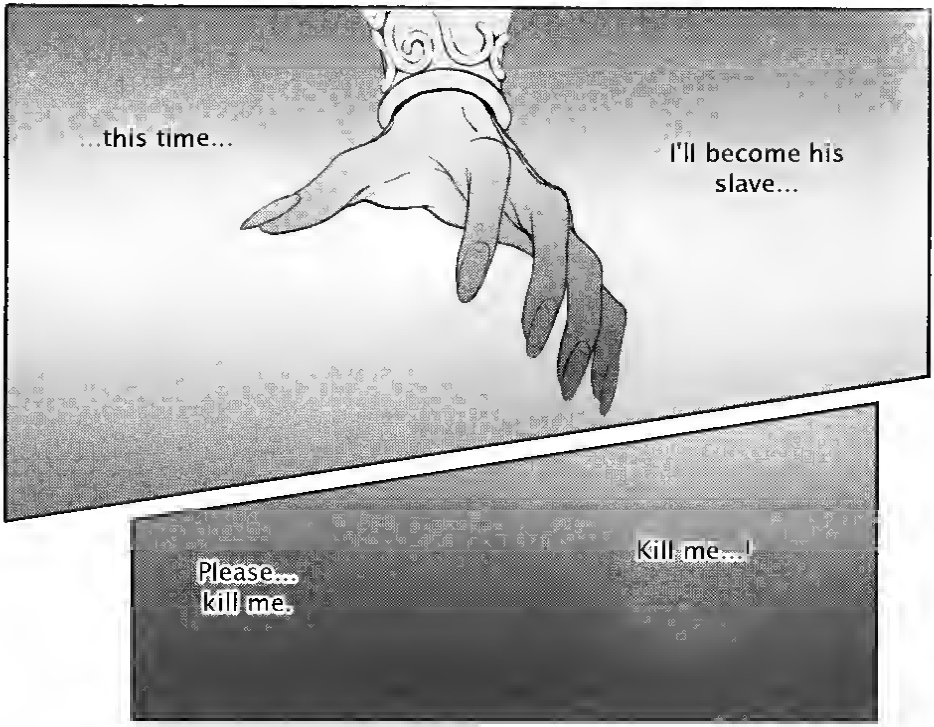
CHIK
In that case ...
ZING
CLANG

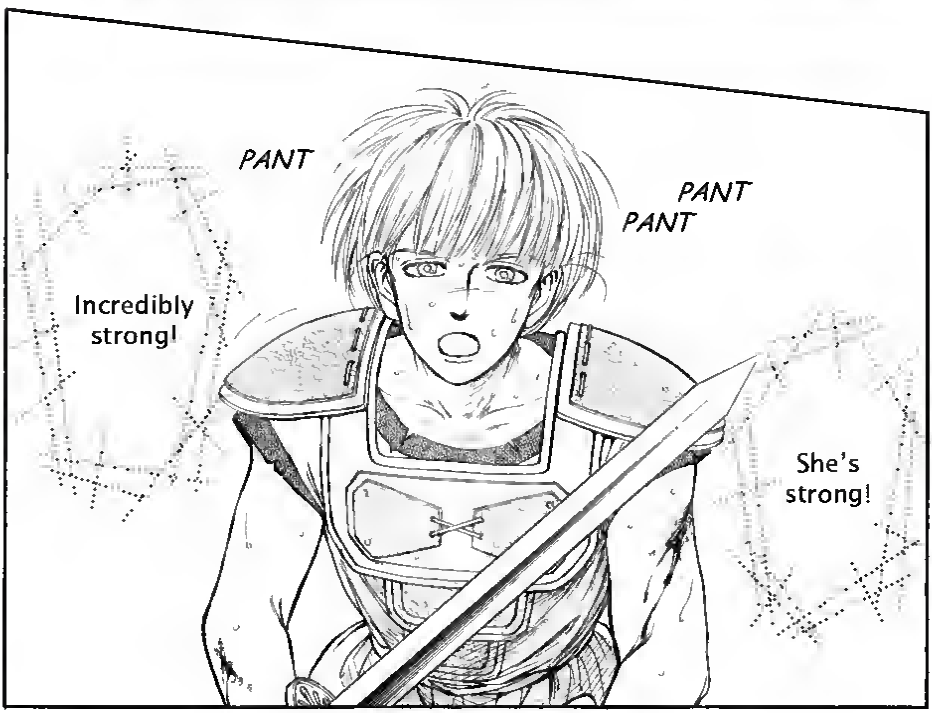
CLANG
Now!
WHIZ
WHIZ
WHIZ
WHIZ
WHIZ
WHACK
WHACK
WHACK

HE
HE
HE
Die!
BAM

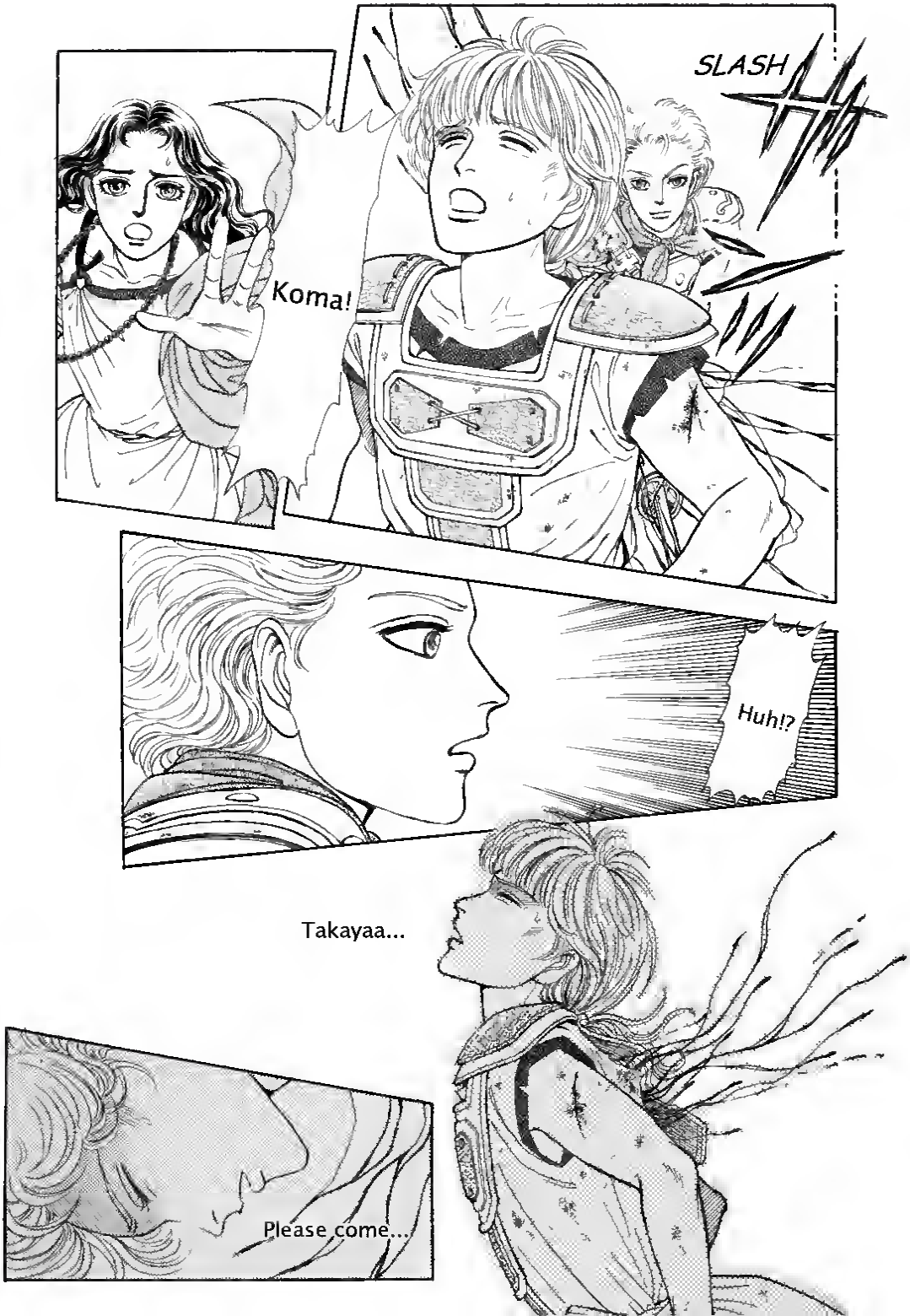

Uh

Capture that one alive!
What are you waiting for?
Kiyu !?
Risson is not in his tent. We'll get them to tell us where he is!
Idiot!
WOBBLE
Whoa !
He's frozen stiff
PROD
Along with several others!
Kiyu...
Kiyu...


...this time...
I'll become his slave...
Please... kill me.
Kill me...!

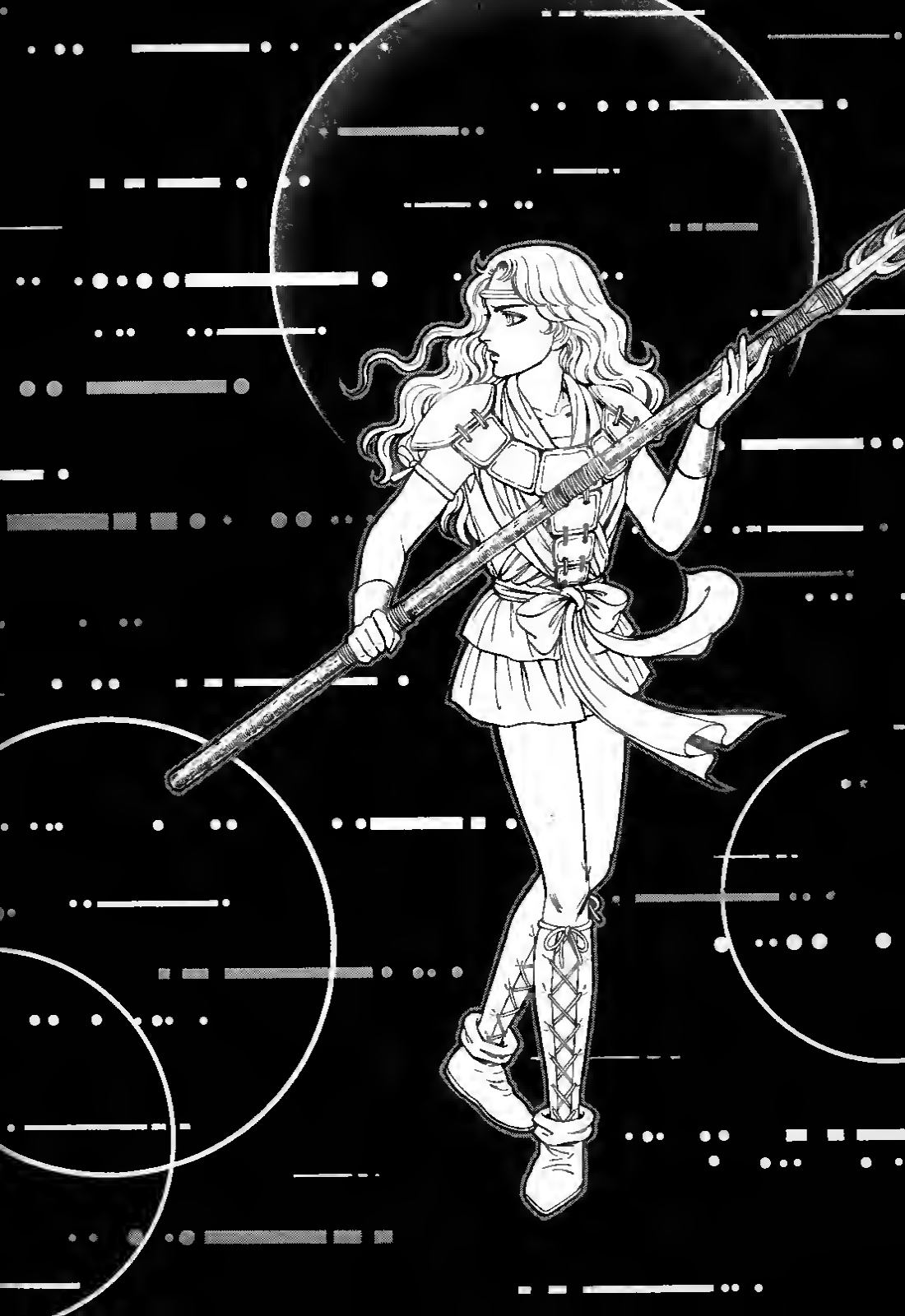

PANT
PANT
PANT
Incredibly strong!
She's strong!

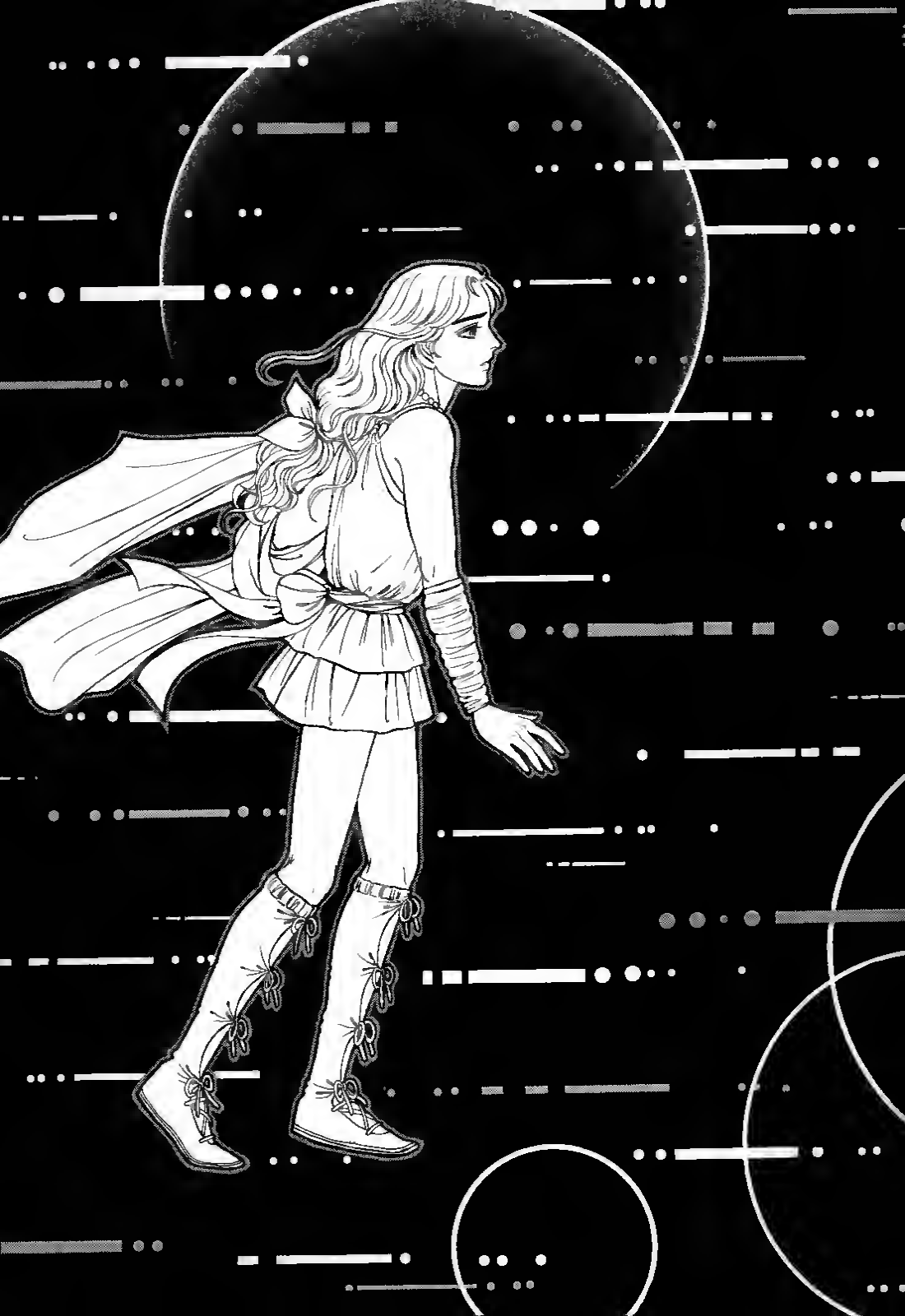
I can't fend off her spear any longer!
PANT
PANT
PANT
I have to get out of here...
I have to lure Yoko as far from this place as possible...
GASP
If Toko comes here...
Stay away!

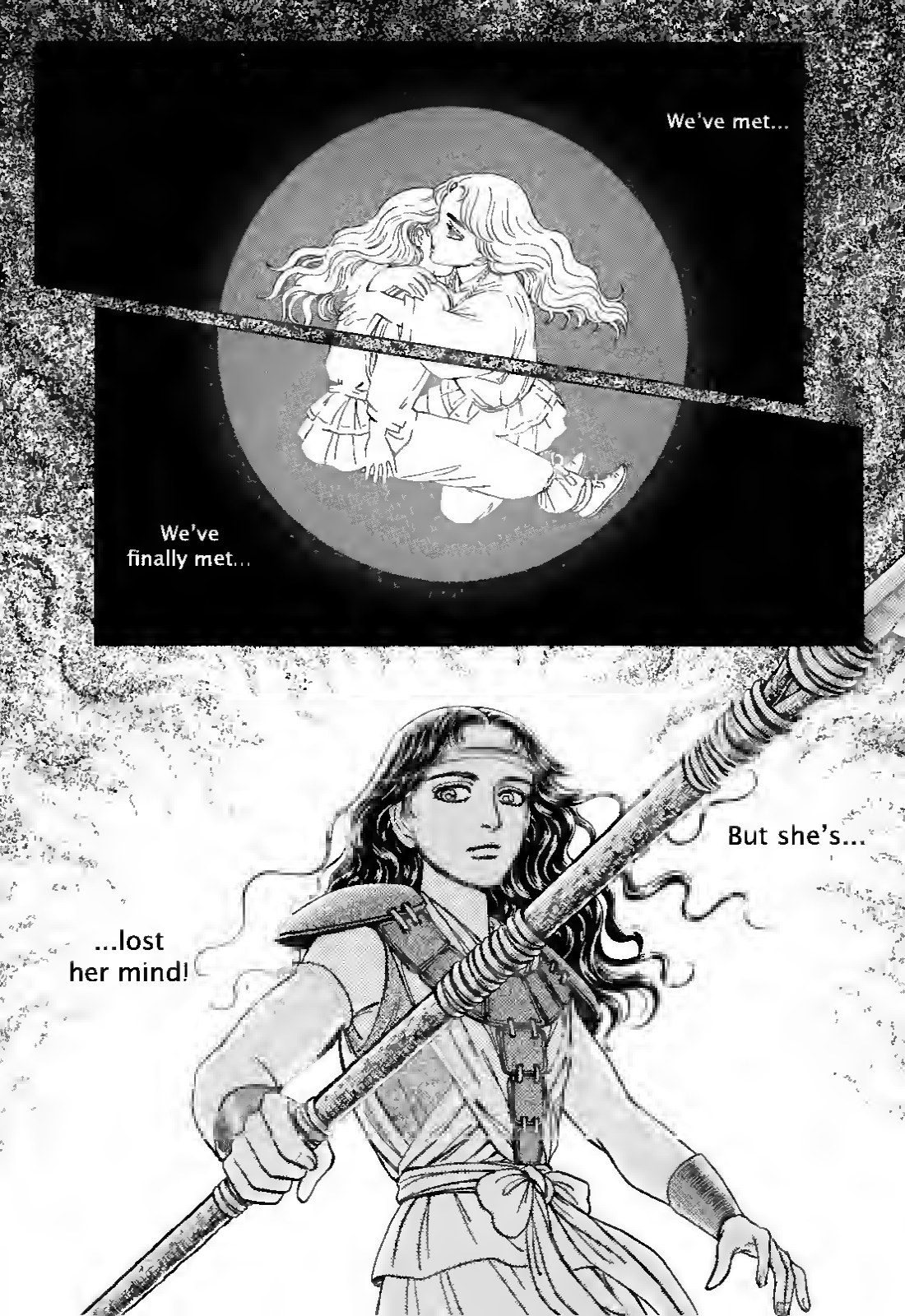

SLASH
Koma!
Huh!?
Takayaa...
Please come...

PUNCH
ガッ
I knew it!
No!
Toko!
Two Yoko's !?
Wh- What !?

Yoko...
Yoko ...
Toko ...
It's me...
I'm Toko...






We've met...
We've finally met...
But she's...
...lost her mind!

I understand how Yoko feels...
But I understand it.
I'm sorry.
FWOOSH
You did it for me...
...killing people...
Living like that...

I'm sorry...

I was the only one who was happy...

So... you stayed alive for me.

Because you knew...

You knew if you died, I would too...

Let's end it all...

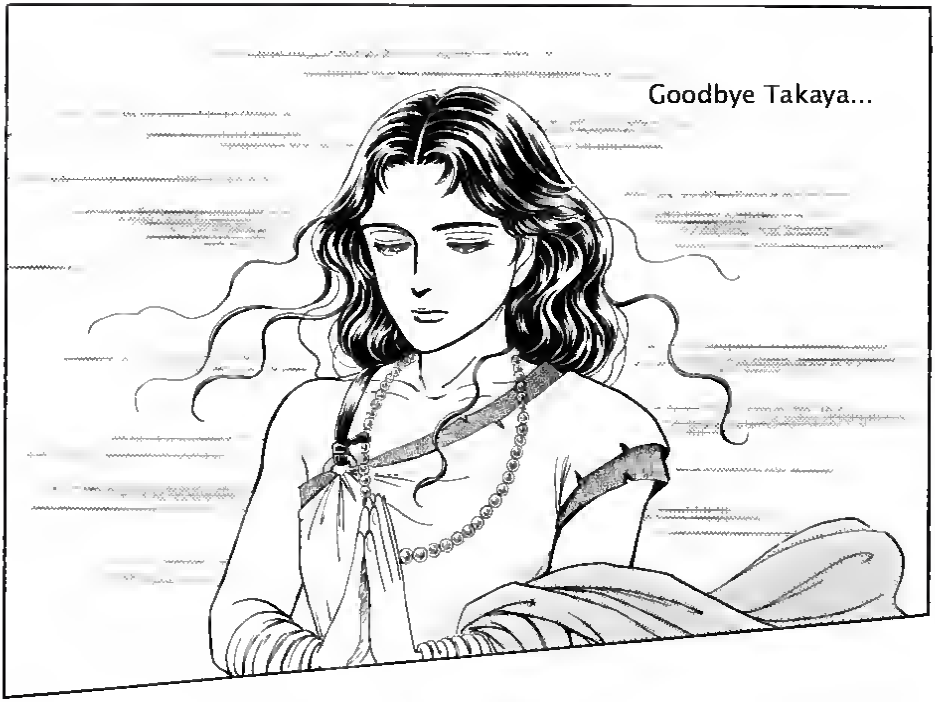
I won't leave you alone ever again...

We'll die together and reunite as one...

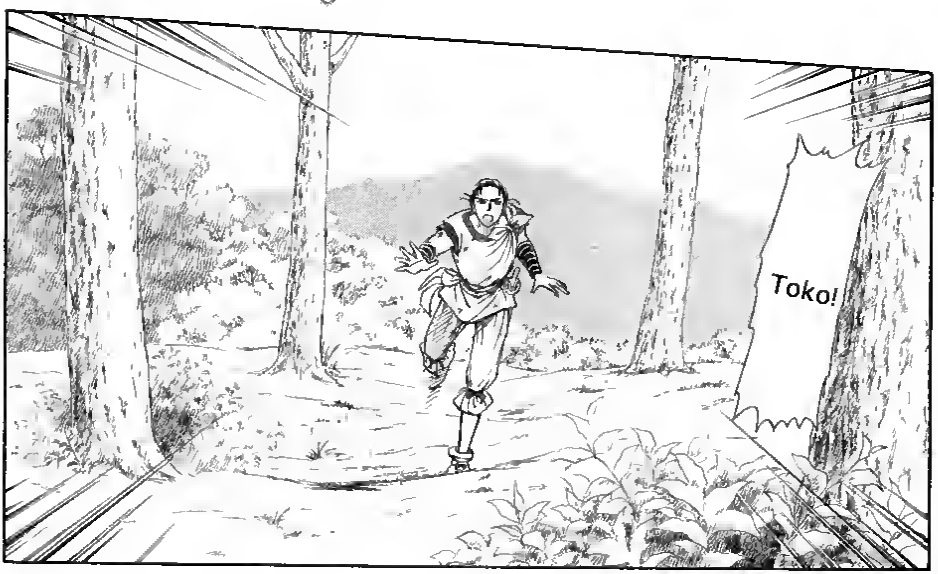
That way...

...your sorrow will become mine...

...and my happiness will become yours...

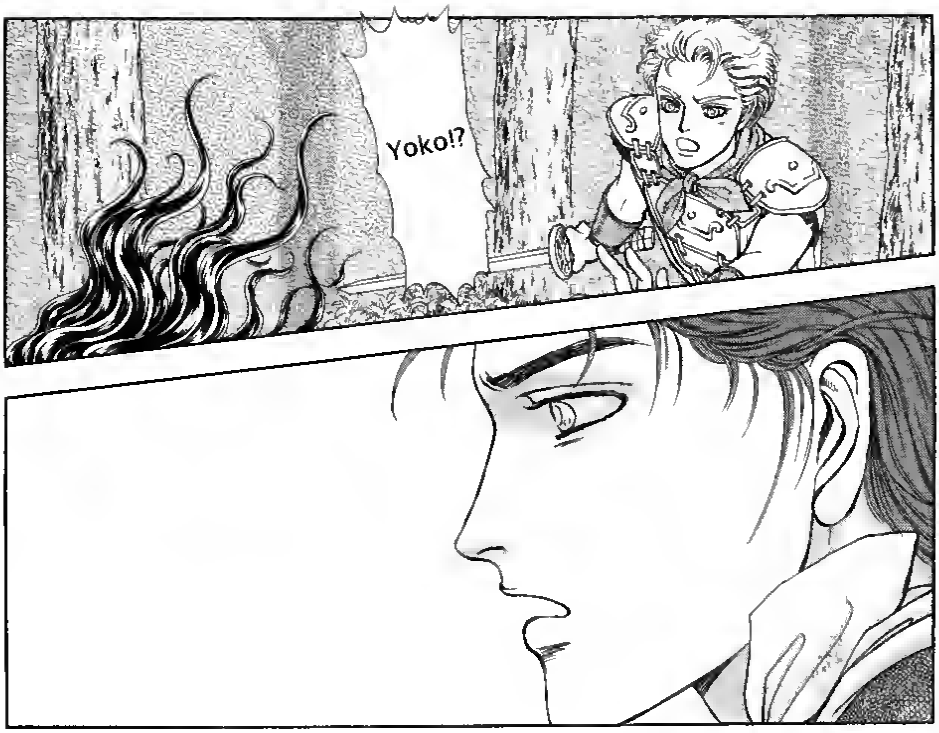

Goodbye Takaya...

I've lived a happy life...


Toko!

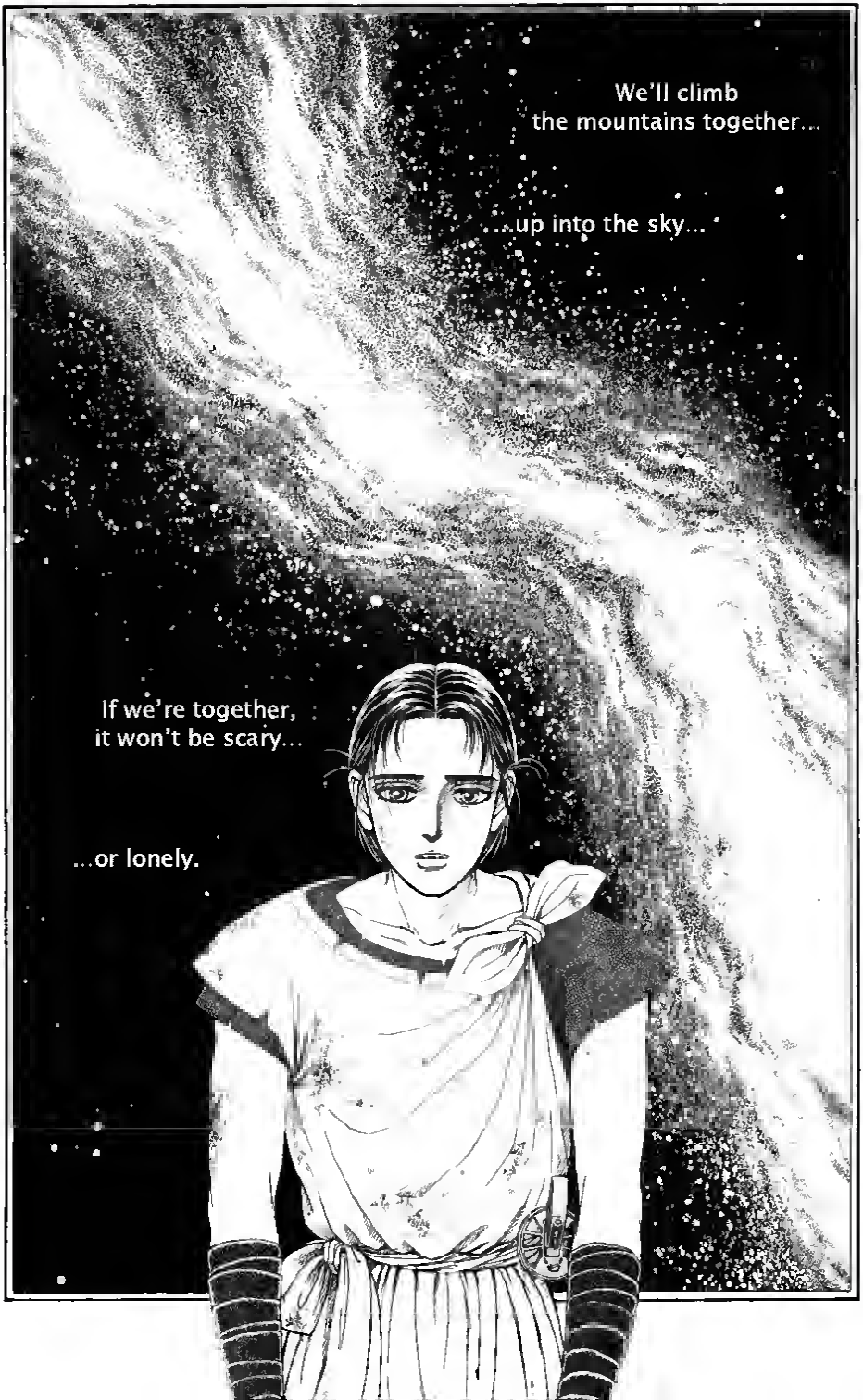
Toko!
Taka
...
THRUST

Ah...

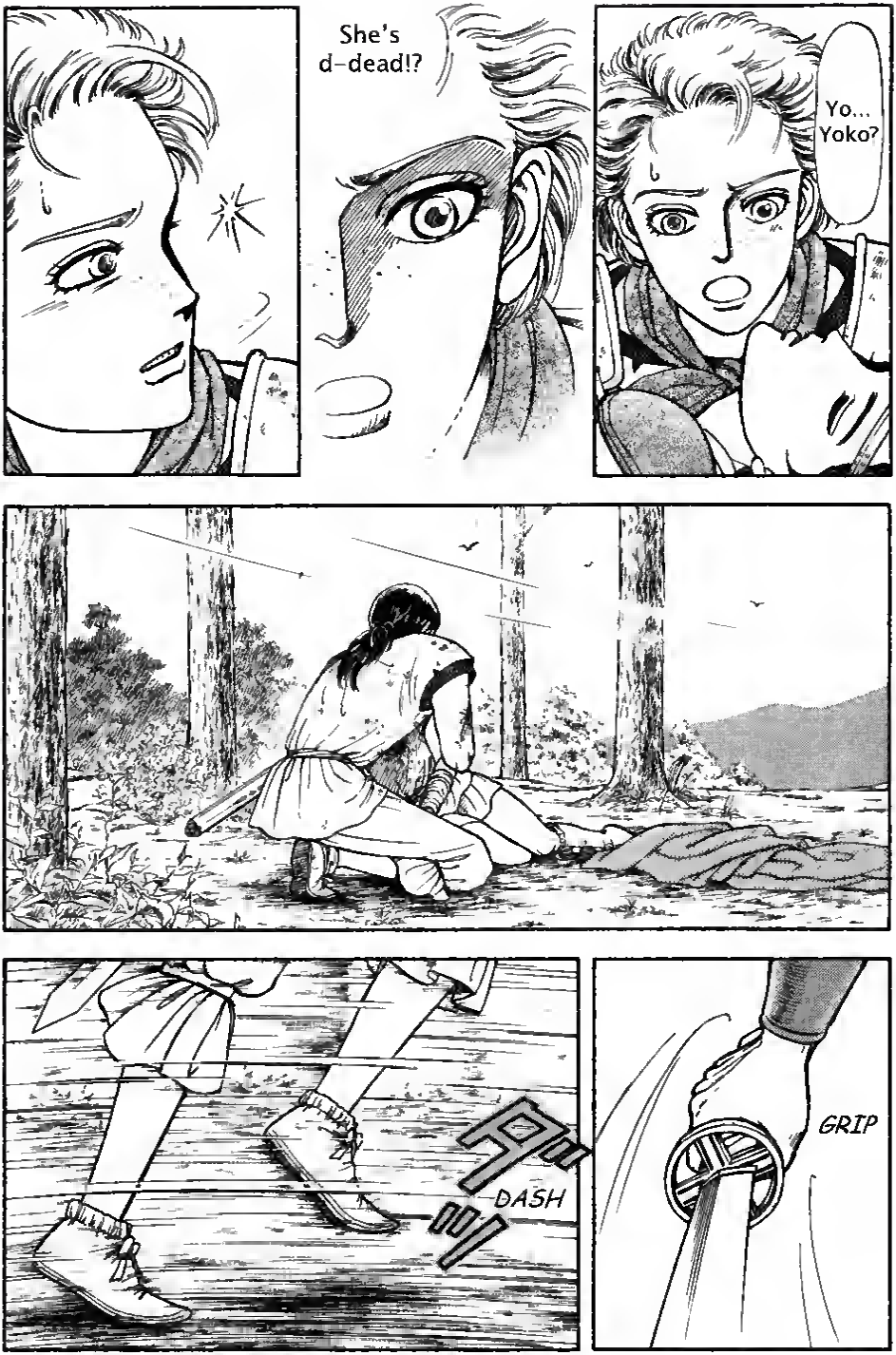

Yoko!?

Takayaa!

Idiot...
If I die...
...you die with me, okay?
Idiot ...
I am an idiot...


We'll climb
the mountains together...
...up into the sky...
If we're together,
it won't be scary...
...or lonely.

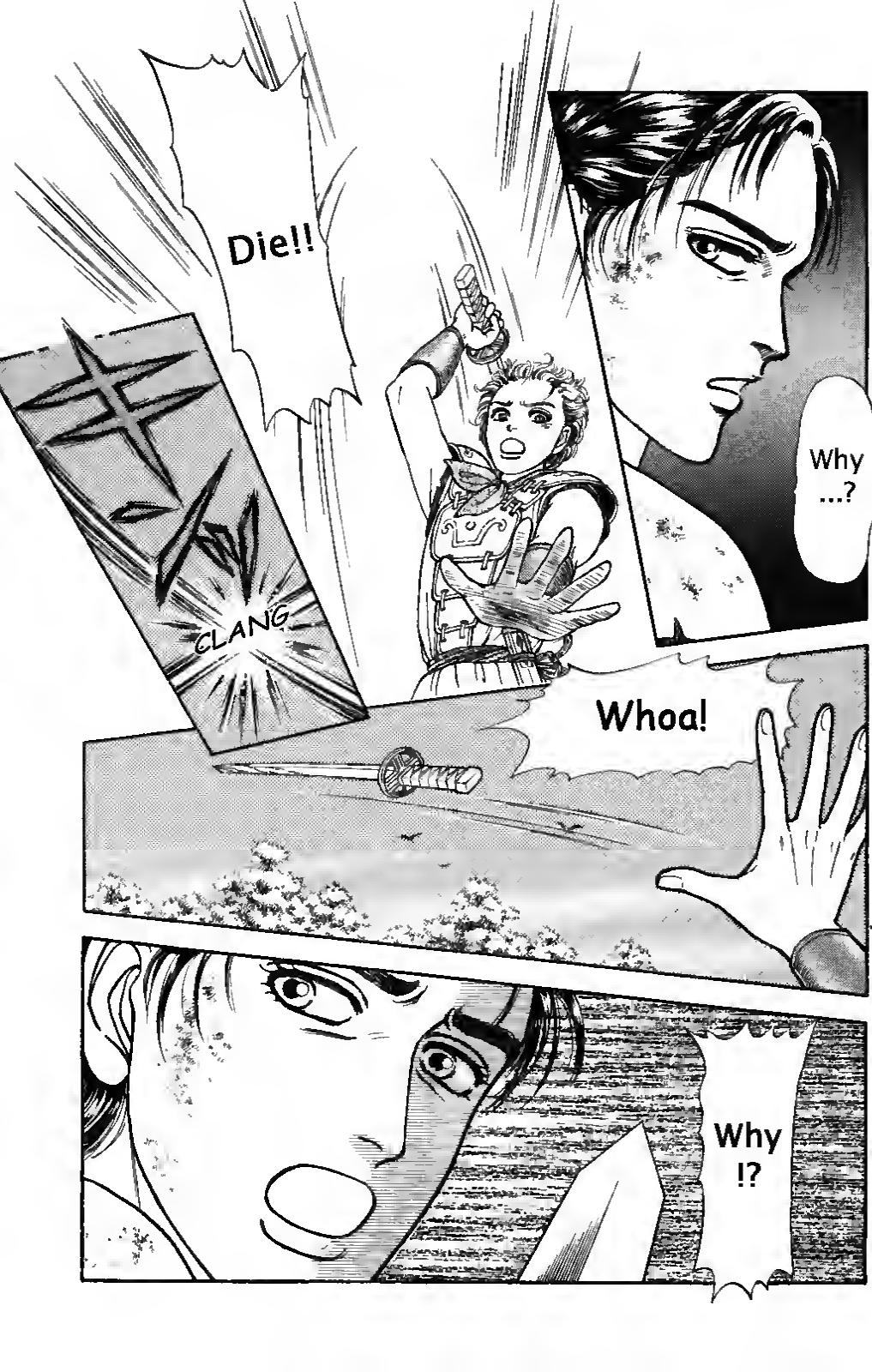
Why did you fall down?
Yoko! What happe-ned!?


She's d-dead!?
Yo... Yoko?
DASH
GRIP

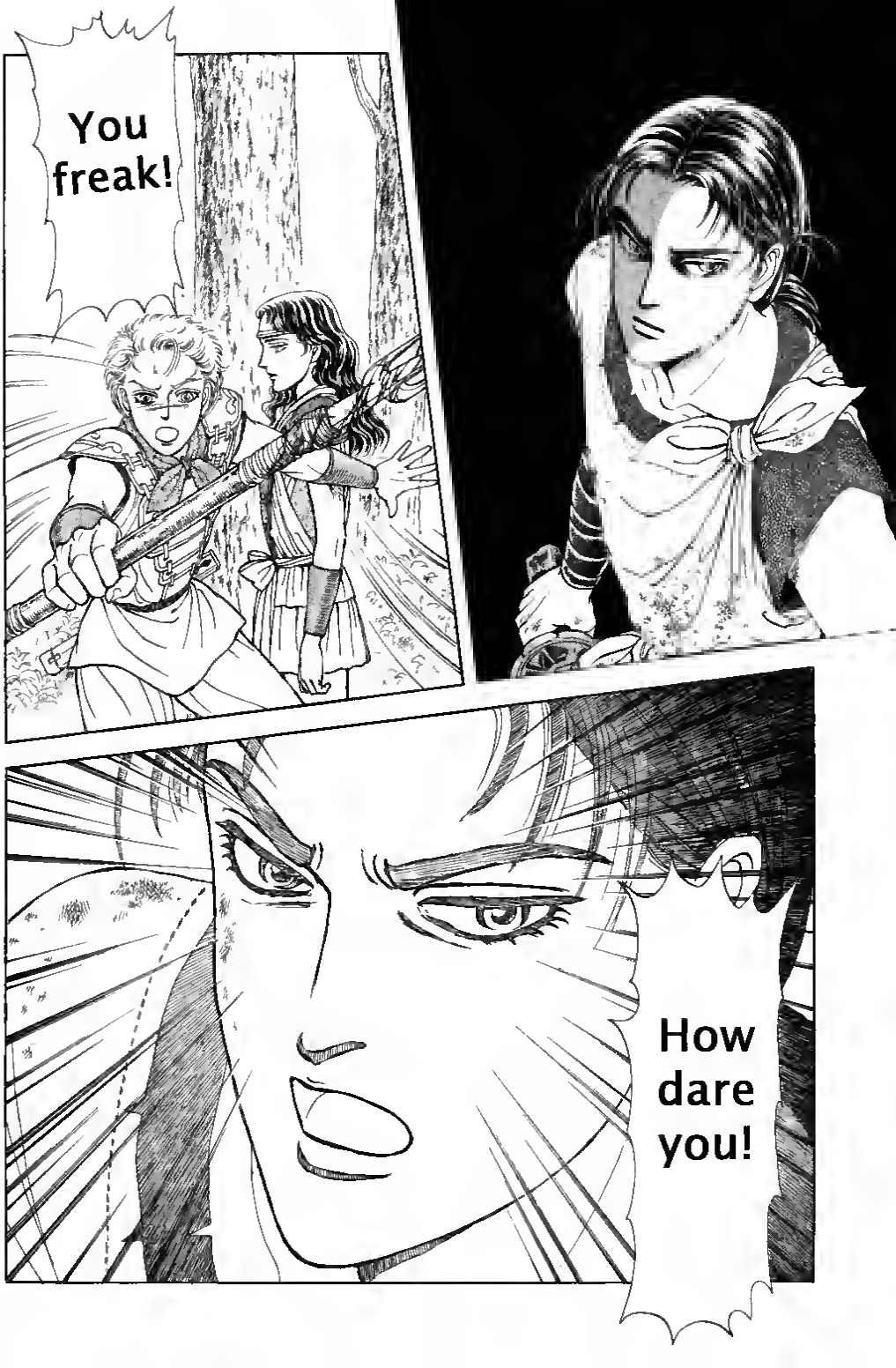
SLASH
Yoko's dead!
Sh- she's dead!
You did something to her, didn't you!

Kill me...
I have nothing left to live for.

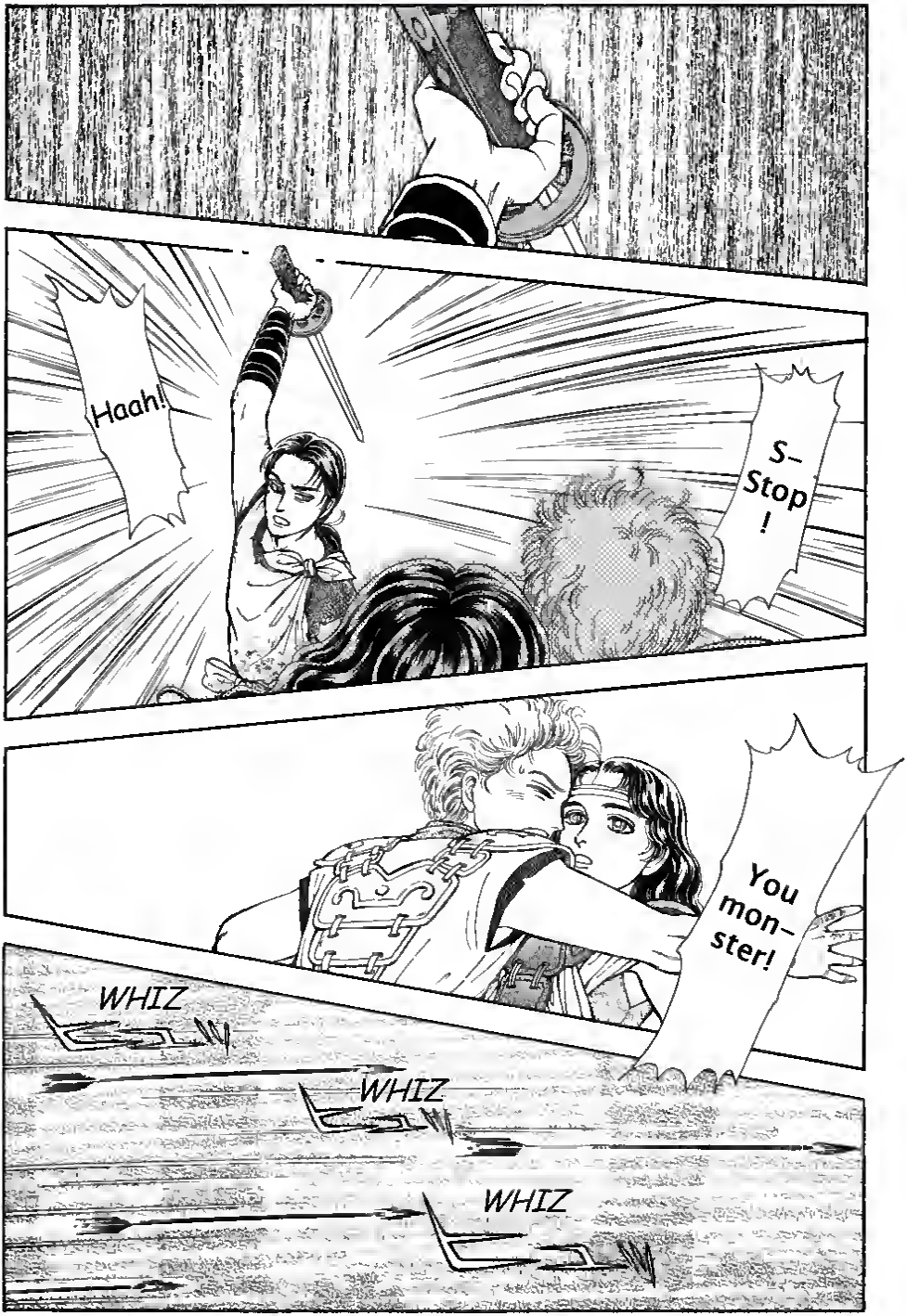
Yo...
Yoko!
STAGGER
Wha
-!?


Die!!
CLANG
Why ...?
Whoa!
Why !?

Why you!?
Just you!? The one who killed Toko!?
Why did you come back to life!?
How dare you...

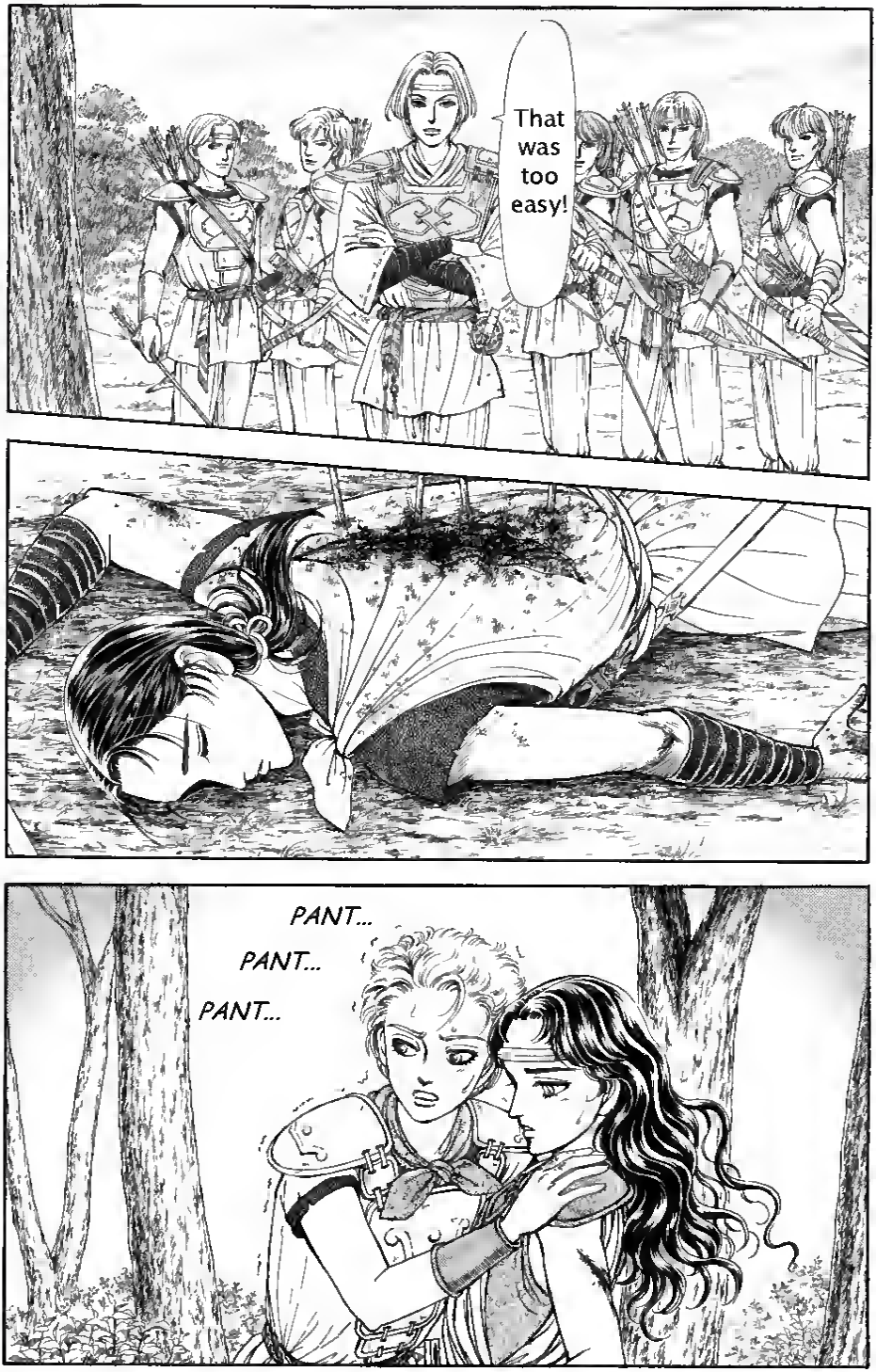

You freak!
How dare you!

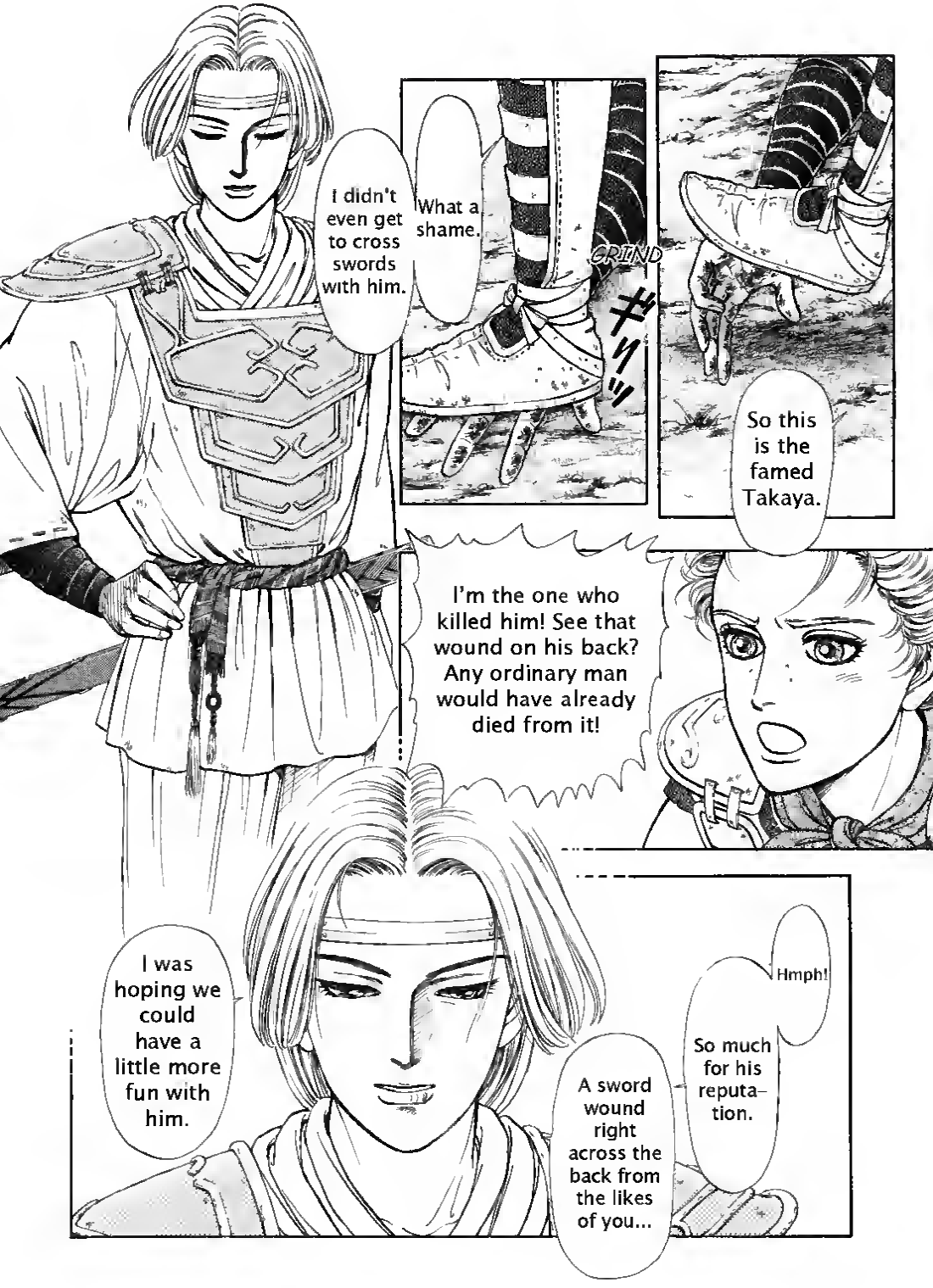
Ahhh!
RIP
Huh
!?


Haah!
S–
Stop
!
You
mon–
ster!
WHIZ
WHIZ
WHIZ

Ah...
THUNK
...
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK

Ah...!
THUD
Ah...!


That was too easy!
PANT...
PANT...
PANT...

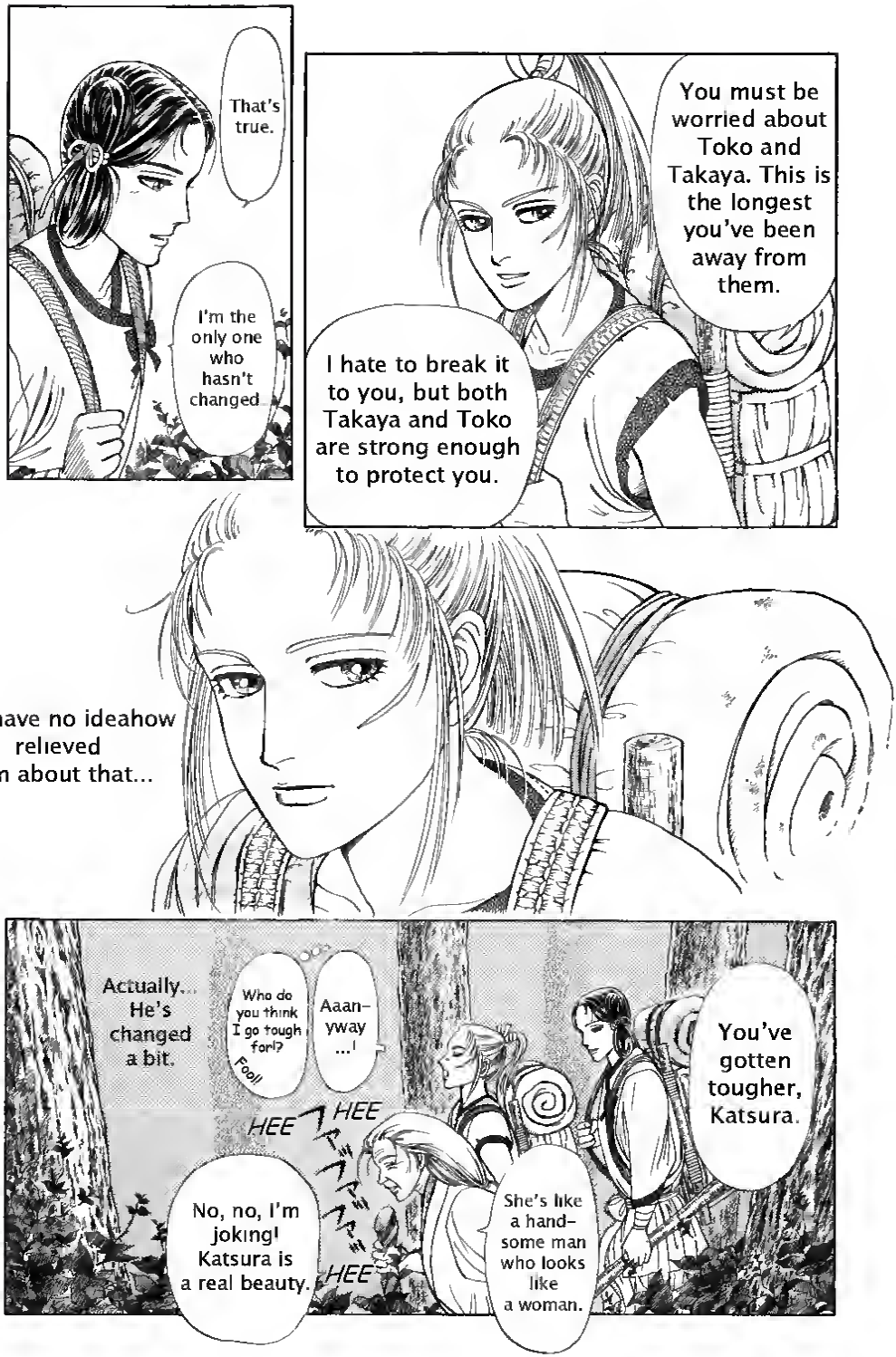

I didn't even get to cross swords with him.
What a shame.
GRIND
ギリッ
So this is the famed Takaya.
I'm the one who killed him! See that wound on his back? Any ordinary man would have already died from it!
I was hoping we could have a little more fun with him.
A sword wound right across the back from the likes of you...
So much for his reputation.
Hmph!

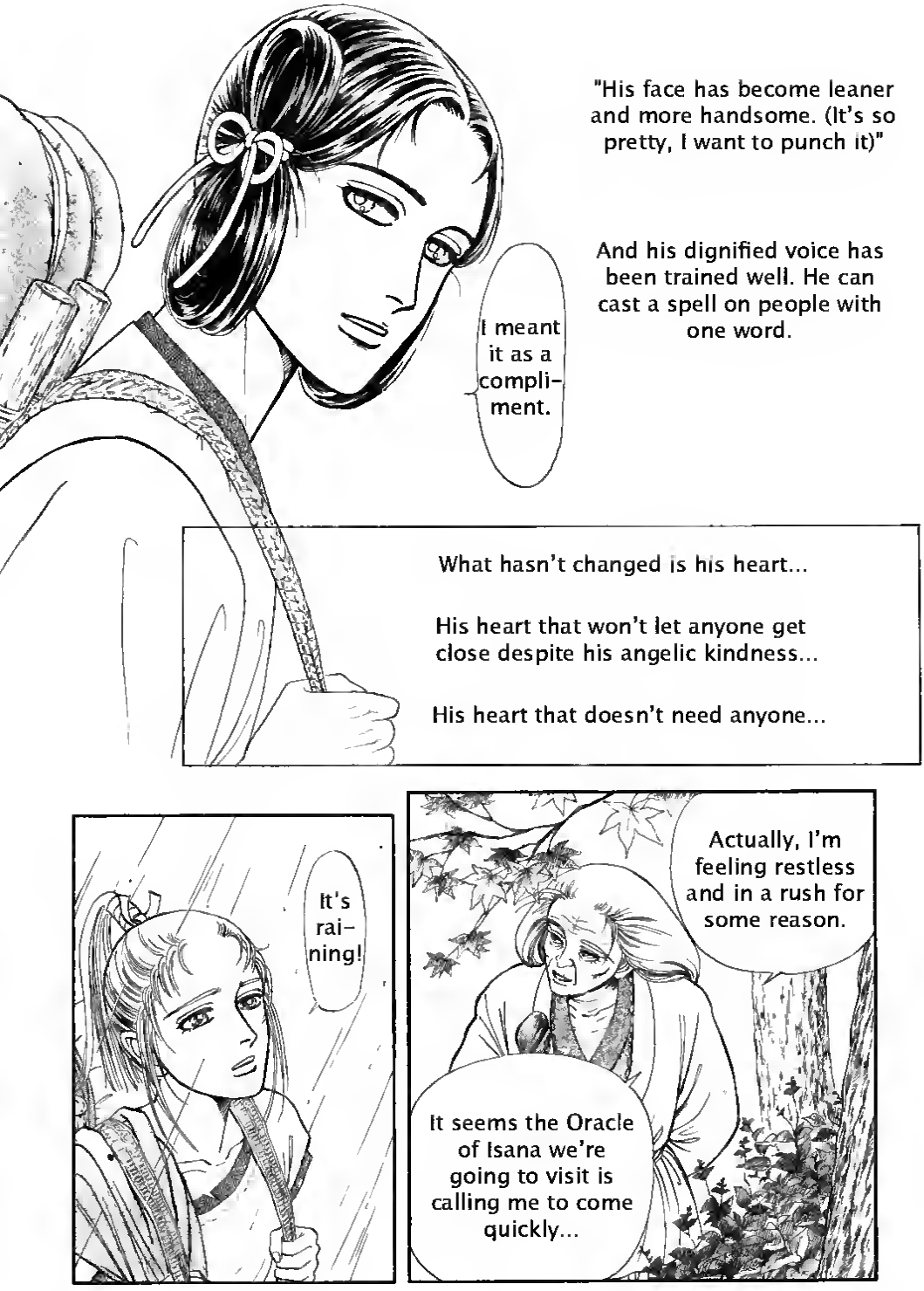
And the s-spear ...
I don't know how, but that tree must have been split by him!
Easy for you to say! You didn't even see what happened!
I'm getting tired of your tall tales.
HE HE HE
Look at the sky, Kai! The weather could change any moment.
N-no...
Dream on. It must've been hit by lightning.
Who is... that?

Yoko !?
That's...
What is it, Yoko?
I've never seen so much fear in your eyes.
That's...
Yoko!
That's...

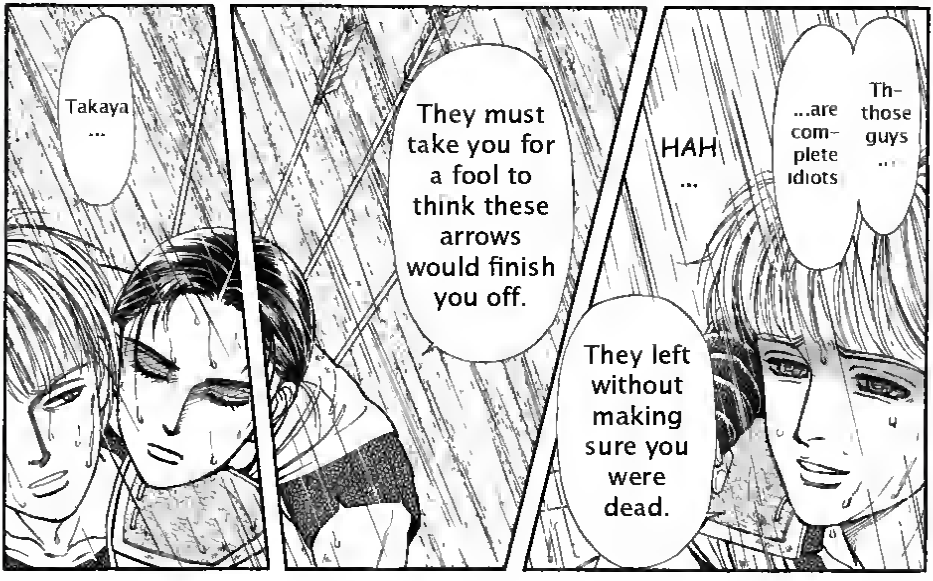
His chest was warm like the sun...
His strong arms hugged me until it hurt...
His kind hands combed my hair...
I know him!?
I know him?

I do it without realizing it...
You keep looking back.
What is it, Aohiko?

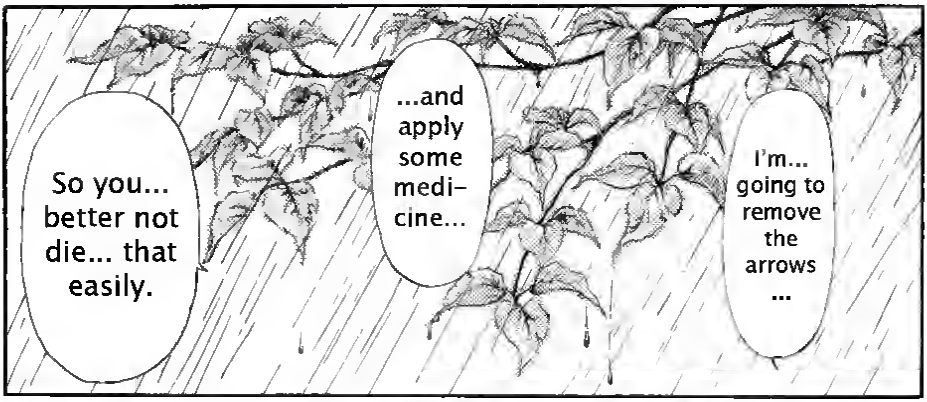

That's true.
I'm the only one who hasn't changed
You must be worried about Toko and Takaya. This is the longest you've been away from them.
I hate to break it to you, but both Takaya and Toko are strong enough to protect you.
You have no ideahow relieved I am about that...
Actually... He's changed a bit.
Who do you think I go tough for!? Fool!
Aaan-yway ...!
HEE HEE HEE
No, no, I'm joking! Katsura is a real beauty.
She's like a hand-some man who looks like a woman.
You've gotten tougher, Katsura.


"His face has become leaner and more handsome. (It's so pretty, I want to punch it)"
And his dignified voice has been trained well. He can cast a spell on people with one word.
I meant it as a compli-ment.
What hasn't changed is his heart...
His heart that won't let anyone get close despite his angelic kindness...
His heart that doesn't need anyone...
It's rai-ning!
Actually, I'm feeling restless and in a rush for some reason.
It seems the Oracle of Isana we're going to visit is calling me to come quickly...

We're in luck ...
The rain will wash away the blood and footprints.
PANT
PANT
I'll go get Toko... as soon as... I'm done carrying you...
Don't worry ...


Takaya ...
They must take you for a fool to think these arrows would finish you off.
HAH ...
They left without making sure you were dead.
Th- those guys ...
...are com- plete idiots

Takay
~aa...
PANT
PANT
PANT
Have you passed on with Toko ...?
Have you already died...?



It always has... right?
...and your body will recover ...
We'll lower your temperature and reduce your breathing rate so you can sleep peacefully...

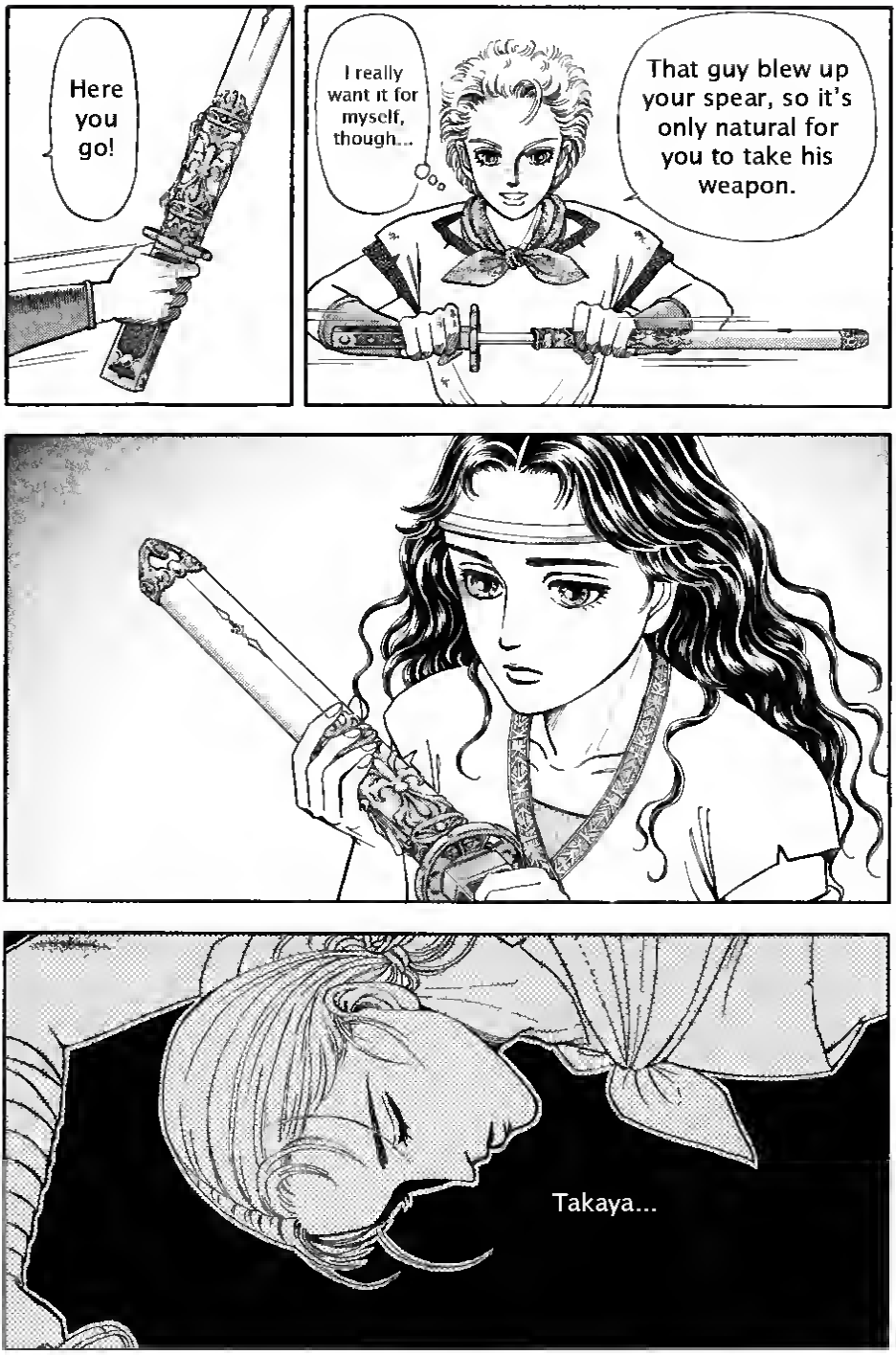
So open your eyes one more time...

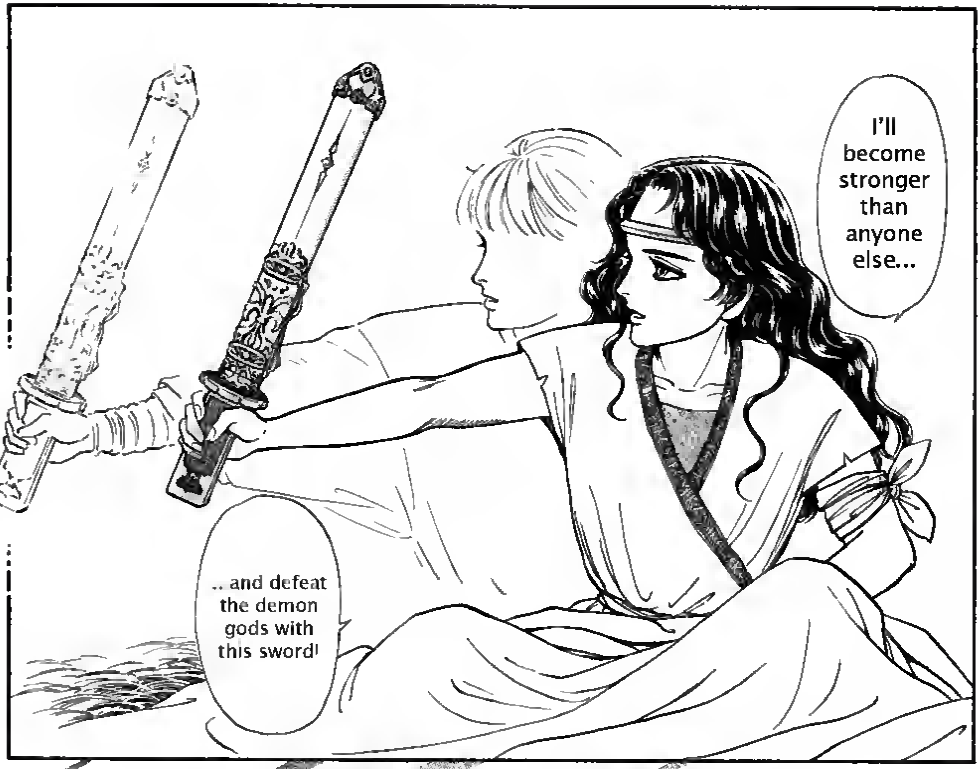
...before I die...

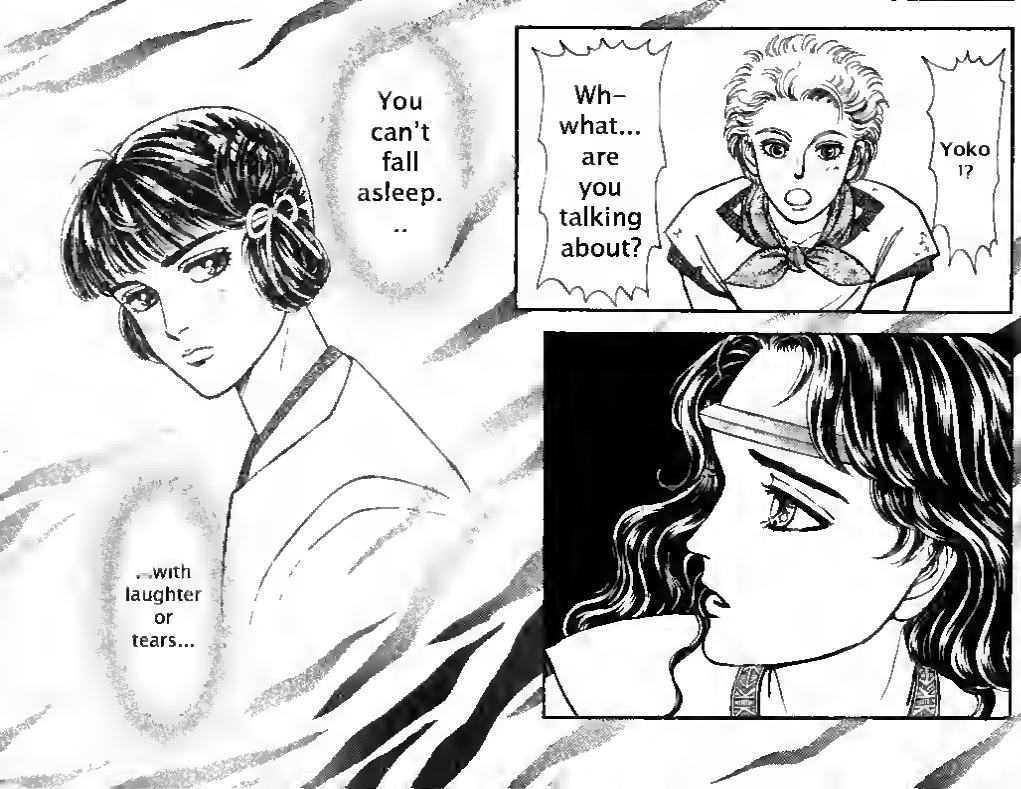
There's something I want to tell you.

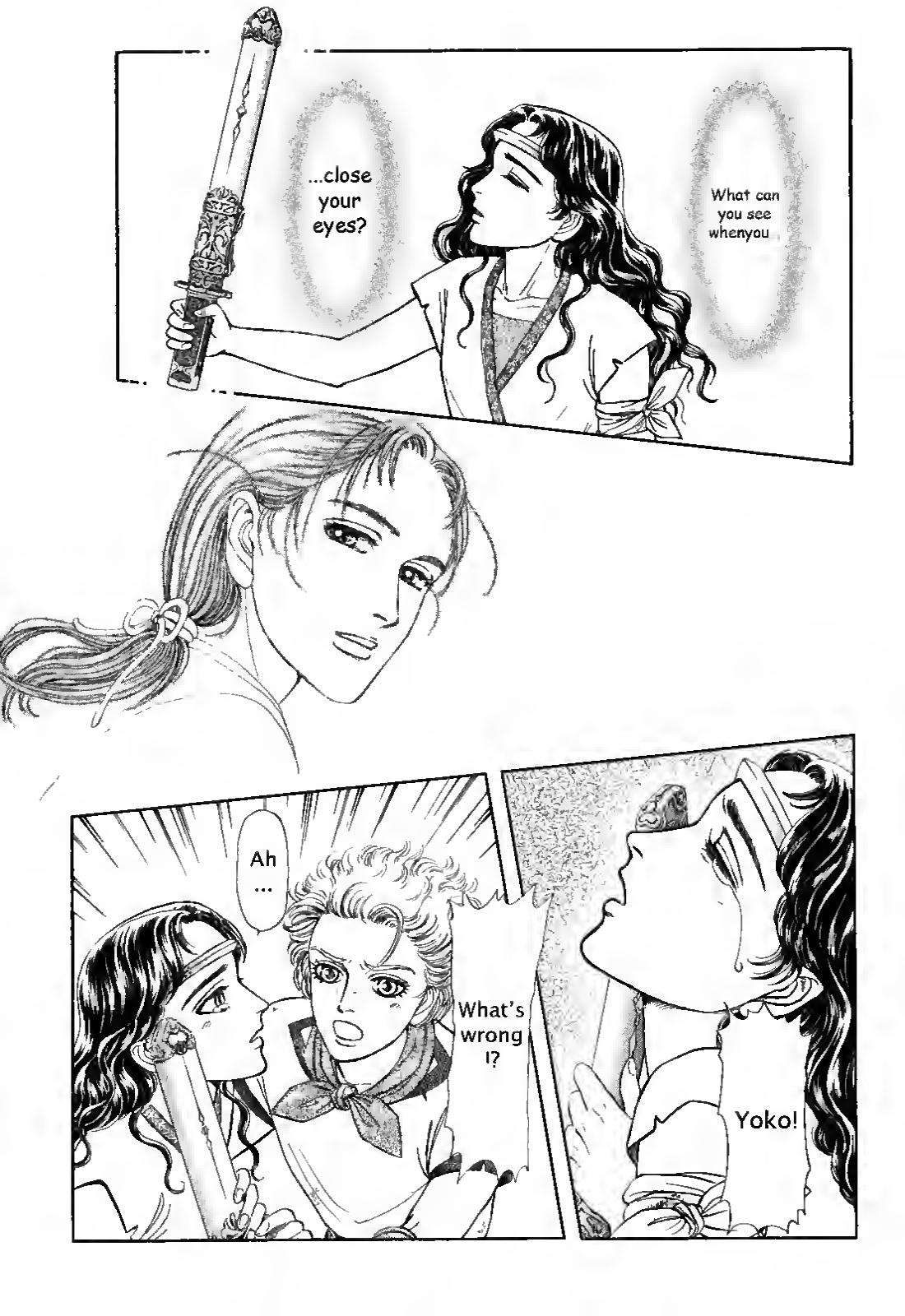
You gave me a scare! I thought you'd died again...
...
Some-thing to eat?
Can I get you any-thing?
Do you need more rest?
...singing me a lullaby just now?
Was that you...

I forgot those kinds of things long ago.
Don't be silly.
A lullaby?
Me?
I dreamed...
...someone was singing to me.
Hayo...
...ne-yo-ne
Kind of small but still cool.
Check it out—a sacred sword!
Hayo...
...ne-yo-ne


Here you go!
I really want it for myself, though...
That guy blew up your spear, so it's only natural for you to take his weapon.
Takaya...


I'll become stronger than anyone else...
..and defeat the demon gods with this sword!

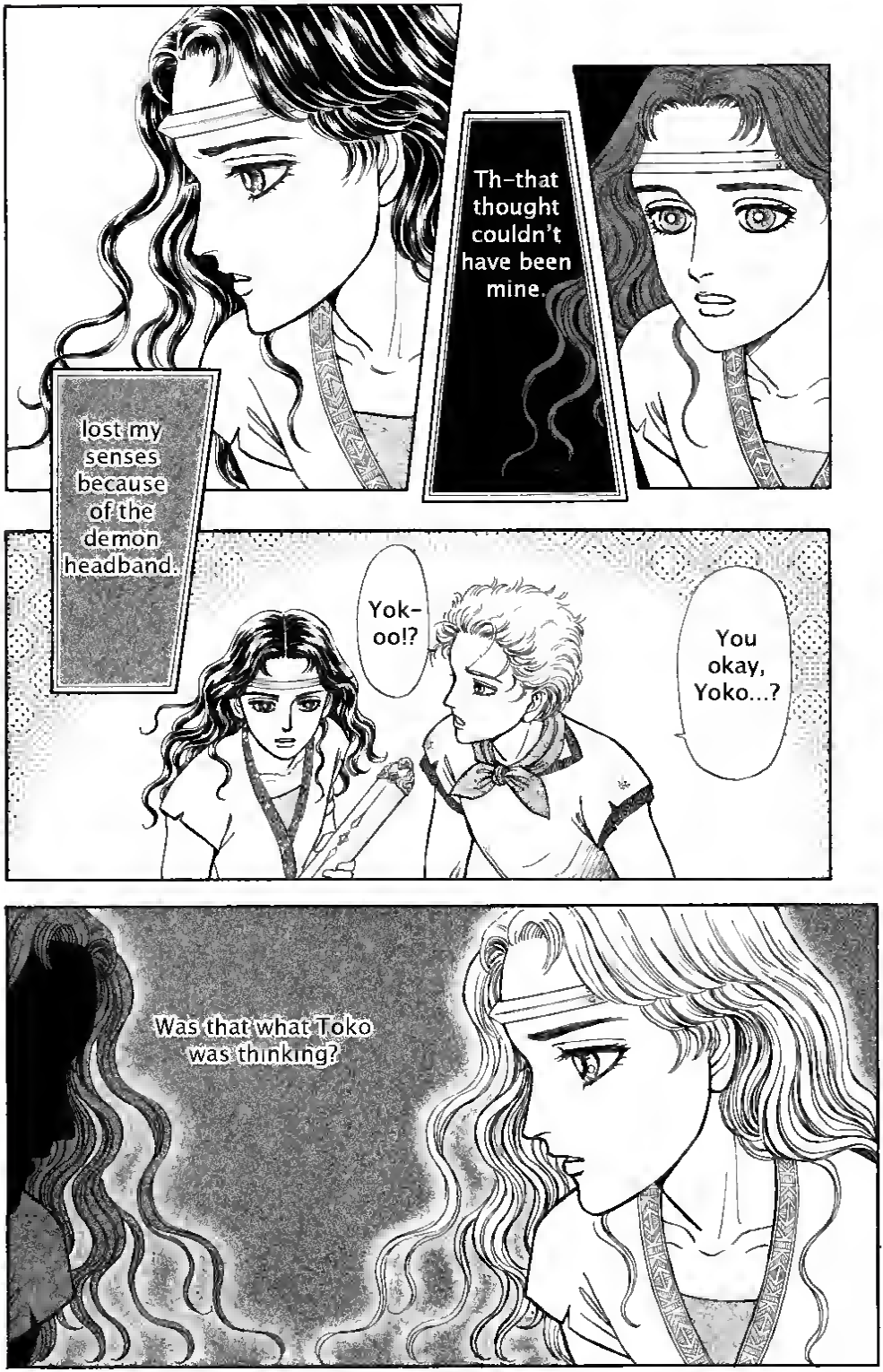

You can't fall asleep...
...with laughter or tears...
Wh-what... are you talking about?
Yoko!?

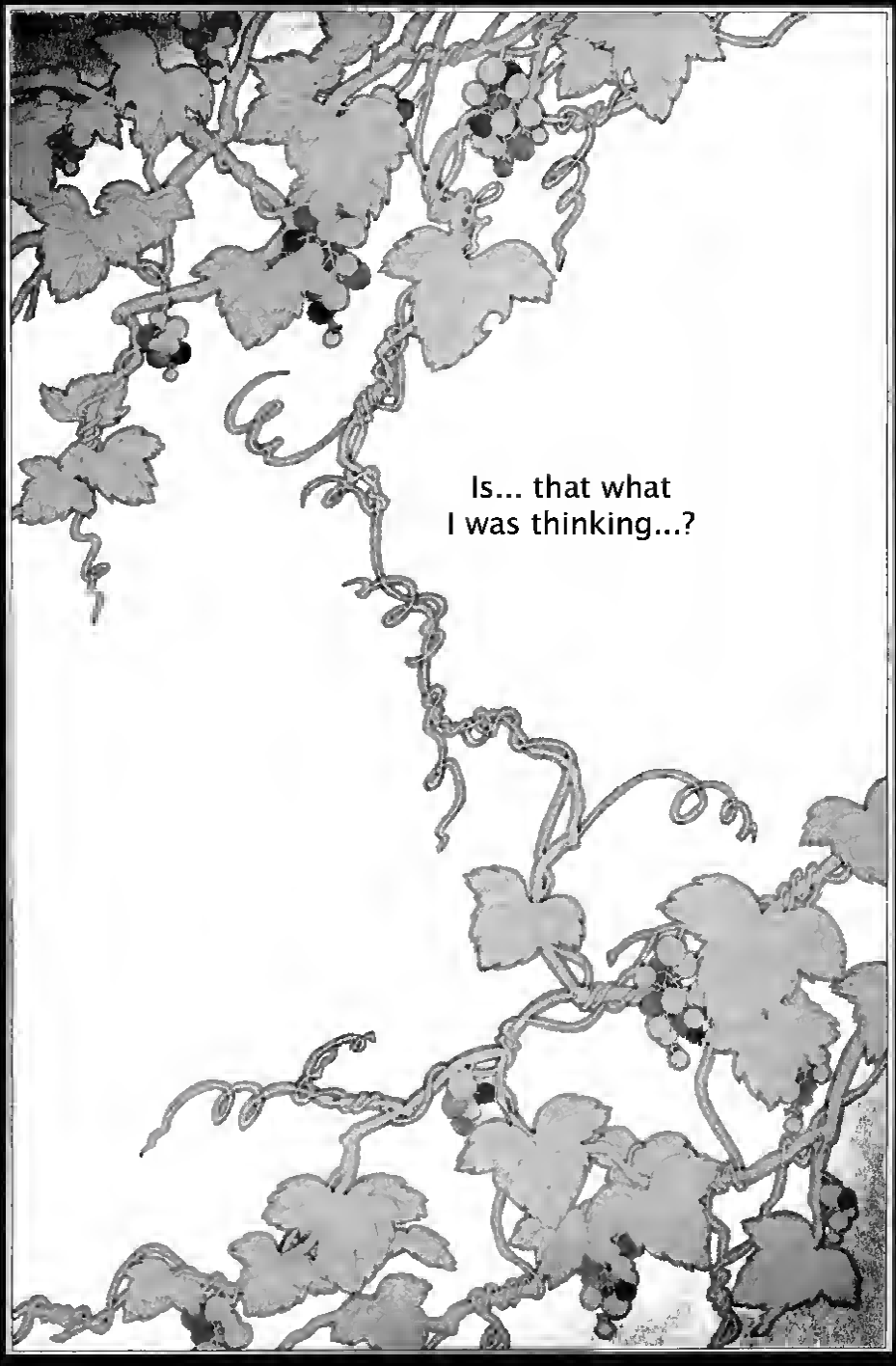

...close your eyes?
What can you see whenyou
Ah ...
What's wrong I?
Yoko!

Who am...
...!!?
Kai...
You're Yoko, obviously.
Get a hold of yourself.
What are you crying for?

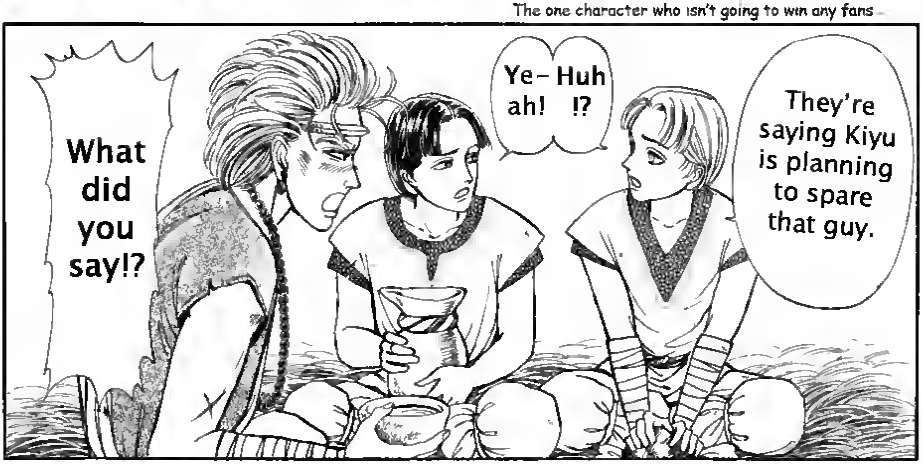
That girl!?
...you killed her, you died... and then came back to life.
She came along ...
Who's that girl who looked exactly like you?
Who is she!?
To ...
I killed Toko!?
They called her Toko.

You two seemed to have some kind of history... I tried to stop it but didn't make it in time.
Oh yeah. The demon headband was activated so you don't remember.
...only I came back to life...?
And then ...
...and reunite as one."
...die toge-ther...
"We'll ...


Th-that thought couldn't have been mine.
lost my senses because of the demon headband.
Yok-oo!?
You okay, Yoko...?
Was that what Toko was thinking?

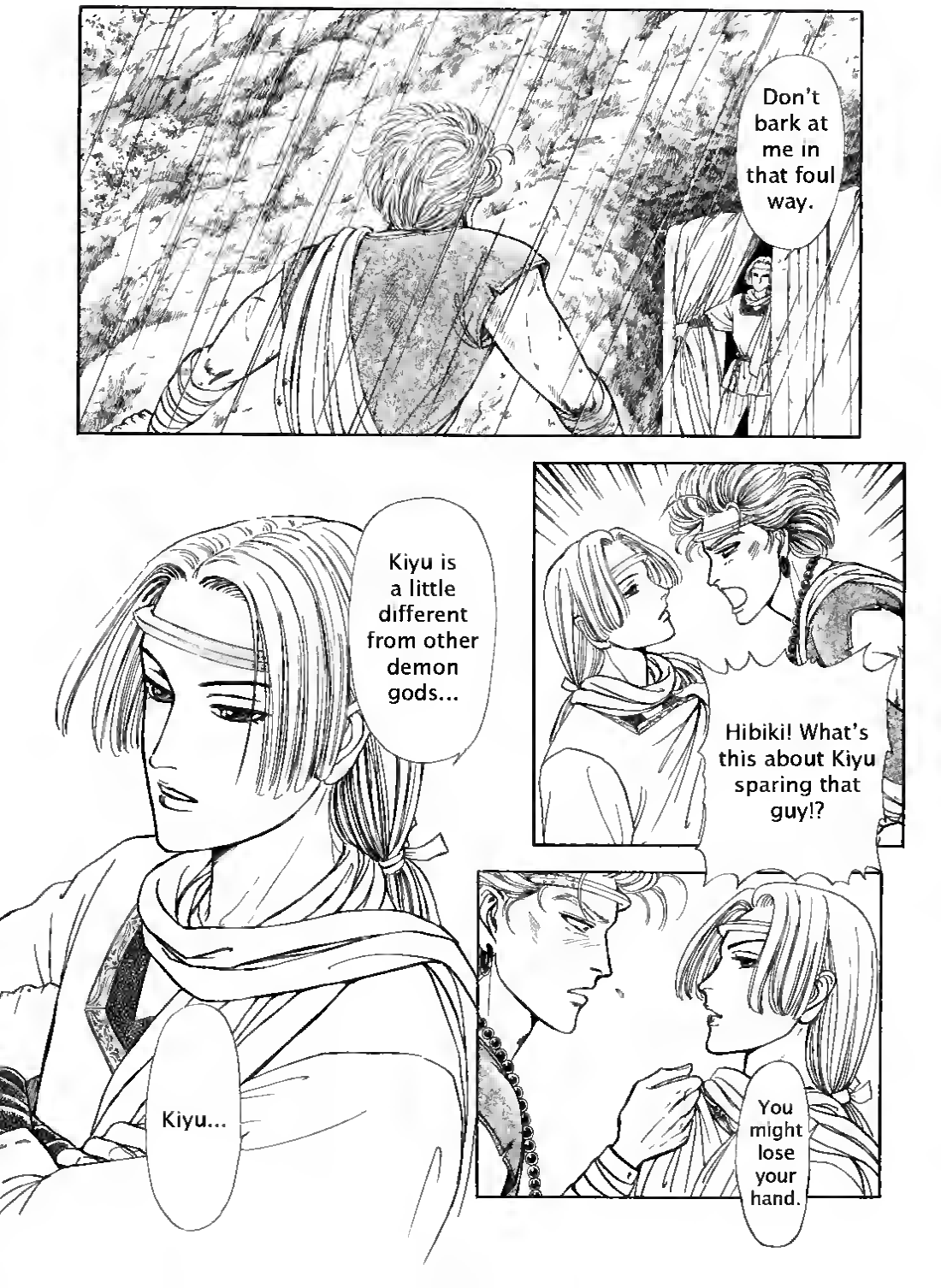

Is... that what
I was thinking...?

The one character who isn't going to win any fans.



Hibiki?
Hibiki's the one who said it!
Eesh!
He's a traitor!
Do you have any idea how many demon-god warriors that bastard has killed!?

Y-ye-es!?
Those dishes better be spotless!
Boys!
Where's Hibiki?
GRRRR
I think the Captain called for him!
What bad luck.
He forced us to become his underlings just because of our clean faces...
A guy with a face like that— a neat freak!
Ppsh!
Hibiki— you in there!?
DOP
DOP
Hibiki!

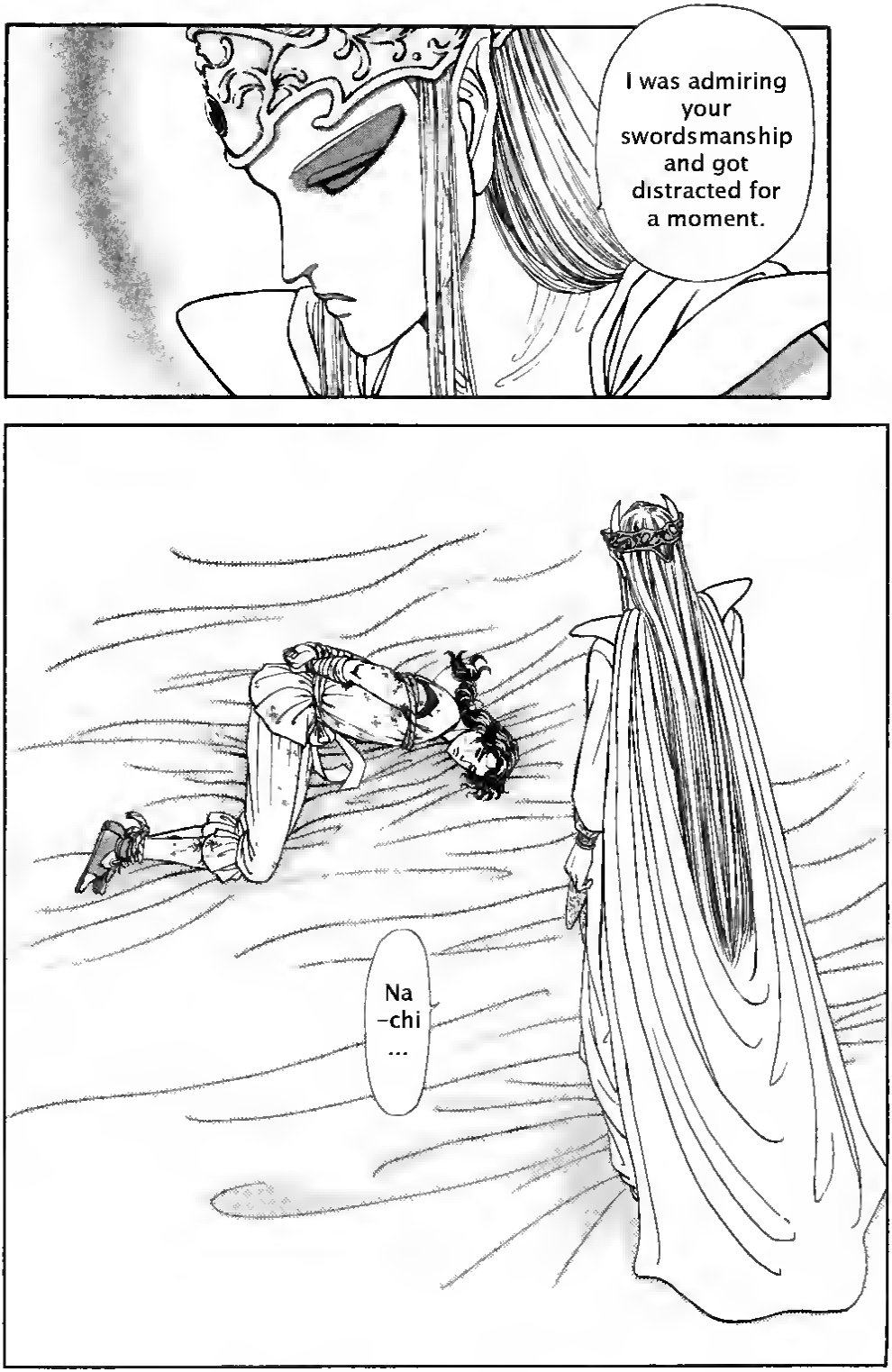

Don't bark at me in that foul way.
Hibiki! What's this about Kiyu sparing that guy!?
Kiyu is a little different from other demon gods...
You might lose your hand.
Kiyu...

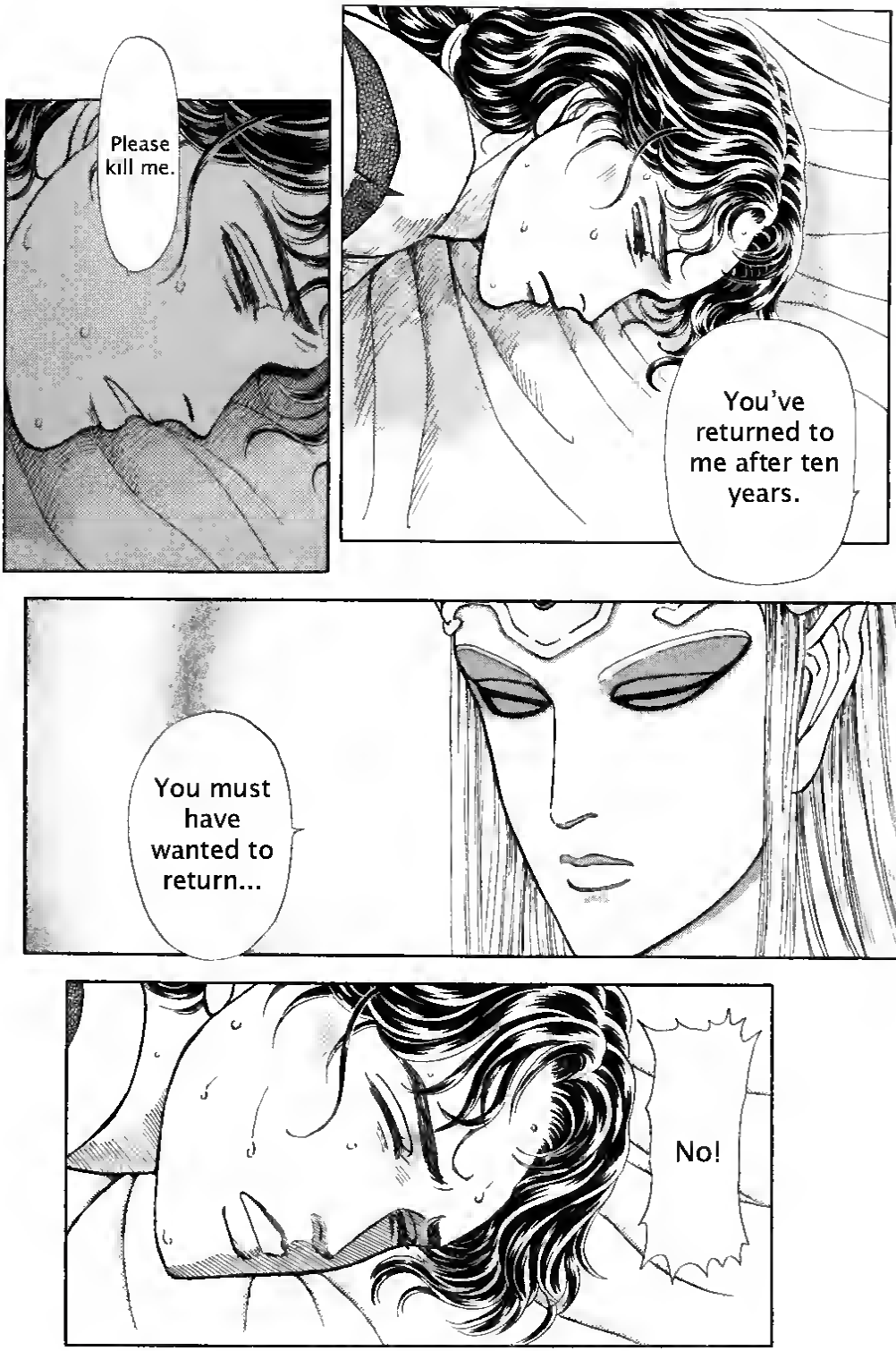
...prefers people who might defect...
...to the demigods at any time over guys like you and me.
He likes to keep them close by.
People like Yoko, for example ...

That's as far as the captain, who's been around the longest, has thought it through.
I have no idea why.
Is he in the prison...?
I'll go kill him before Kiyu can save him!
...
He was just summoned before Kiyu.
Too late...

What must be, must be.
Captain —not you too!
Two hundred, Captain!
If we get Nachi on our side, it'll be like gaining a hundred warriors!
You're okay with that, Hibiki!? He caused your sister's death, right!?
The Captain's favorite saying.
HEH
I'll kill him!
He's my game.
It's best for a hunter to keep his game fresh

I should have stopped the arrows...


I was admiring your swordsmanship and got distracted for a moment.
Na
-chi
...


Please kill me.
You've returned to me after ten years.
You must have wanted to return...
No!

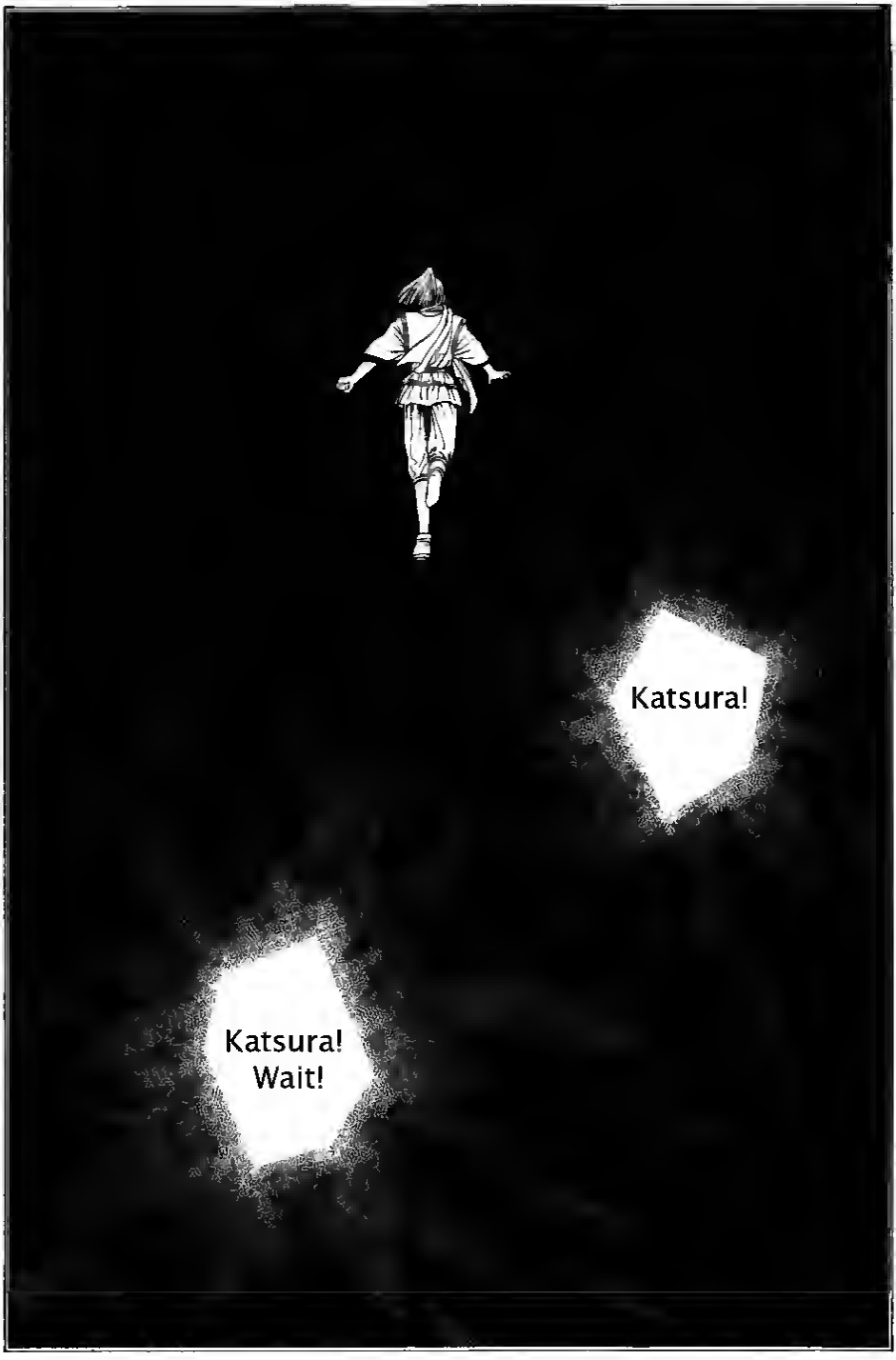
You left because of your attraction and awe.
You are drawn to me now as you were then.
You were afraid of being enslaved by me.
But you are already my slave.
For that is what you truly wish.

Evil becomes you...
You can't help but be attracted to it.
I like that contradiction and tension.

I–I...
Could you breathe easy under Risson?
No!!
No!
...and others can only live in mud.
Some fish can only live in clear water...

If that is the law of nature, that is the way it should be.
Fish that live in the mud are still beautiful.
Under me, you can be a free, beautiful fish.
Here, even your nightmares will become sweet dreams.

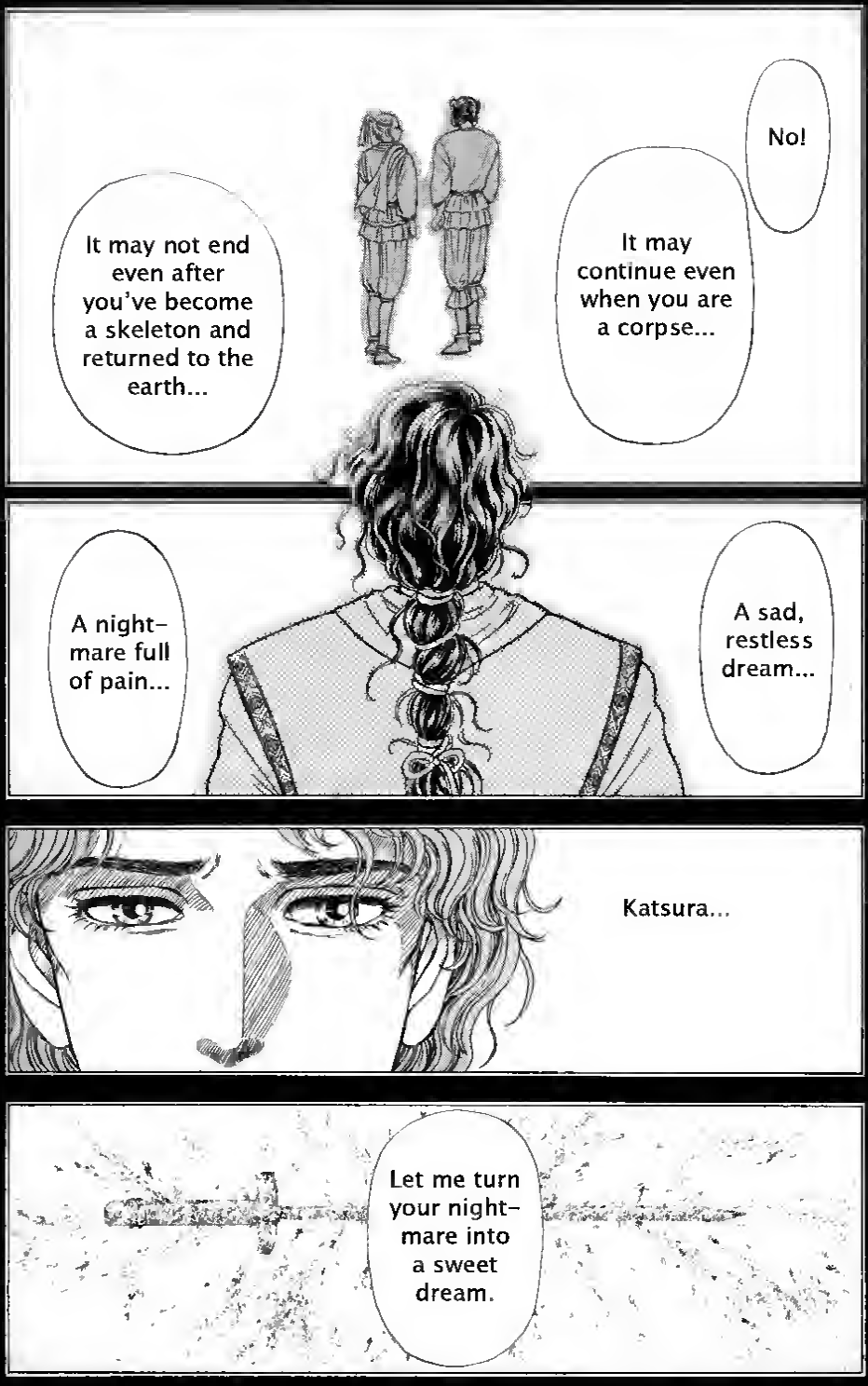
Who is that shadowy figure burned into the back of your tightly shut eyelids?
You keep having ...
...the same dream ...
...about this person—over and over again.


Katsura!
Katsura!
Wait!

Can't you hear me calling you?
Katsura!
I'm here!
Who are you looking for!?
The man you named Ichirota is over here!
Can you not see me!?
Look at me!

Are your eyes unable to make out my form?
Are your ears unable to hear my voice?
Your heart!
Your ears!
Your eyes!

That's right! They all belong to that man!
They belong to that man you risk your life to protect!
Katsura
Katsura!
You'll just keep having that dream...
...until death delivers you...

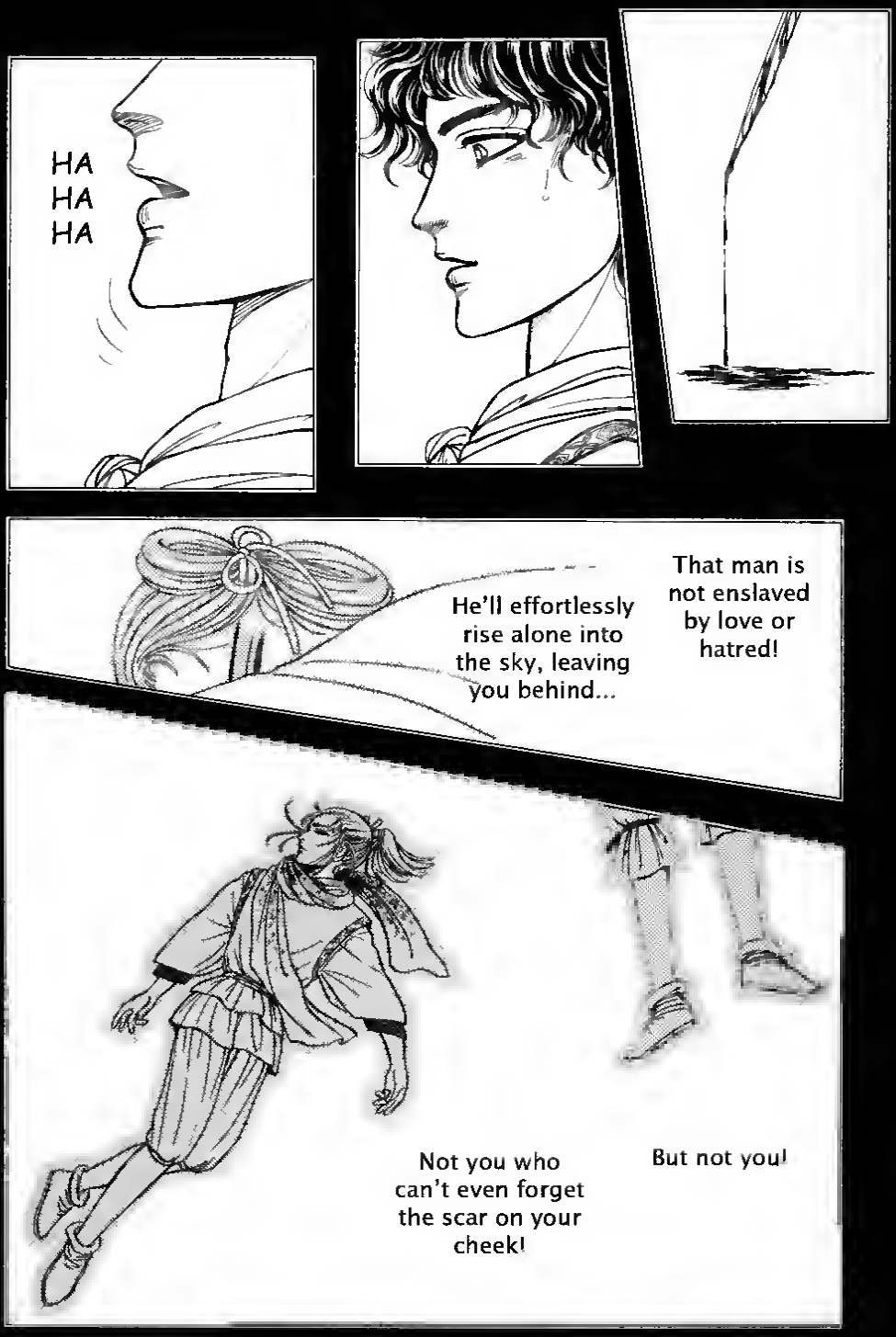

No!
It may continue even when you are a corpse...
It may not end even after you've become a skeleton and returned to the earth...
A night-mare full of pain...
A sad, restless dream...
Katsura...
Let me turn your night-mare into a sweet dream.

That sword is what your heart desires...
Use that sword.
It will grant your wishes...
It will change your dream.
Do as you wish...
I'm sure you know what to do.

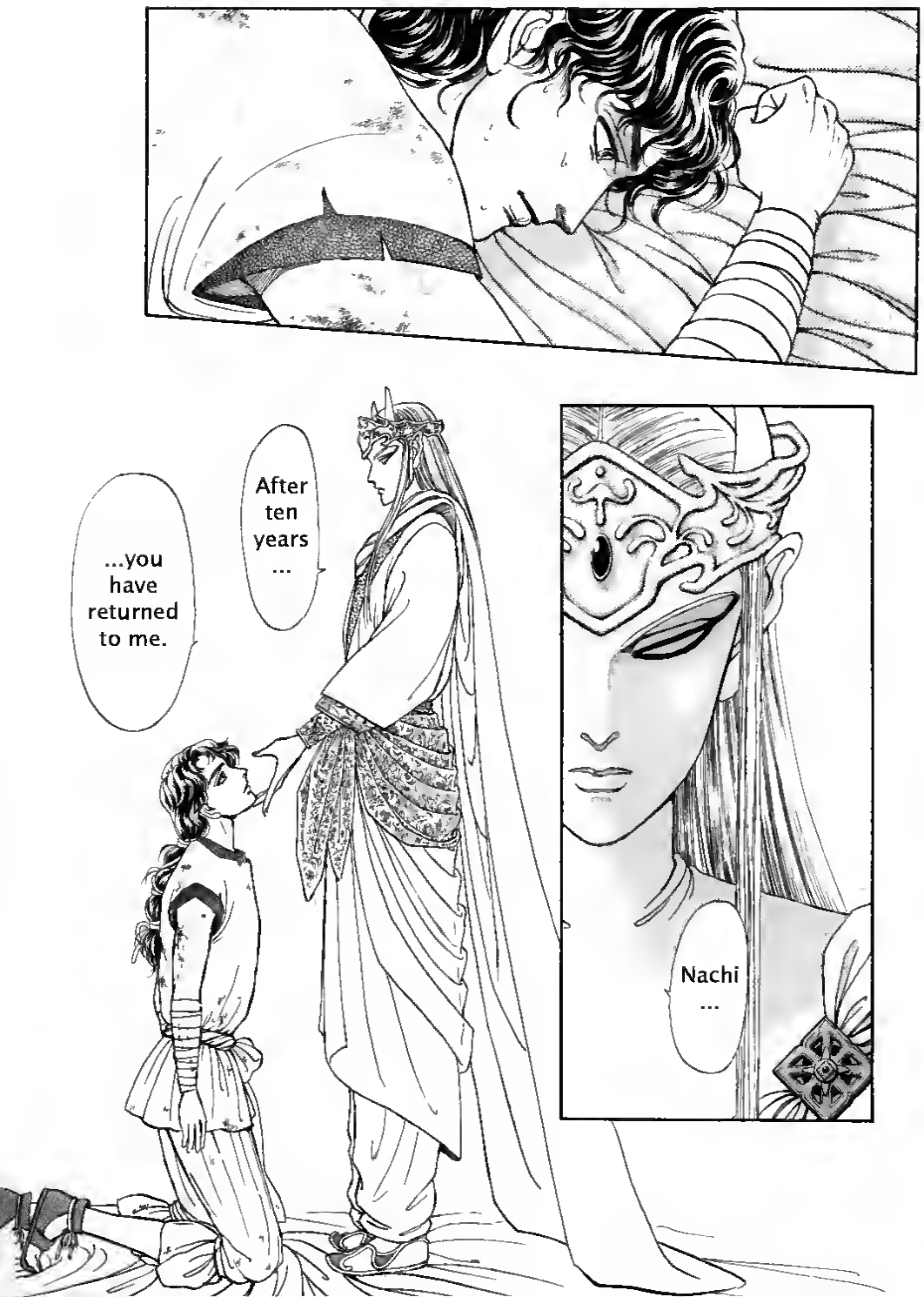
SLASH

Ichi-
rota...
...and
hear my
voice...
Now you
can see
me...
I am
Nachi.
The man
who killed your beloved!

Engrave it deeply in your heart!
Burn it into your eyes!
So that even after you die...
SLASH
...you will never forget!


HA
HA
HA
He'll effortlessly rise alone into the sky, leaving you behind...
That man is not enslaved by love or hatred!
Not you who can't even forget the scar on your cheek!
But not you!

Your pride will keep your soul from rising into the sky!
So when you die...
...hate me with all your soul! Curse me! Despise me!
You will be enslaved to me forever.
The deeper your hatred, the longer the weight of it will keep your soul tied to the earth—and to me!


After ten years ...
...you have returned to me.
Nachi ...

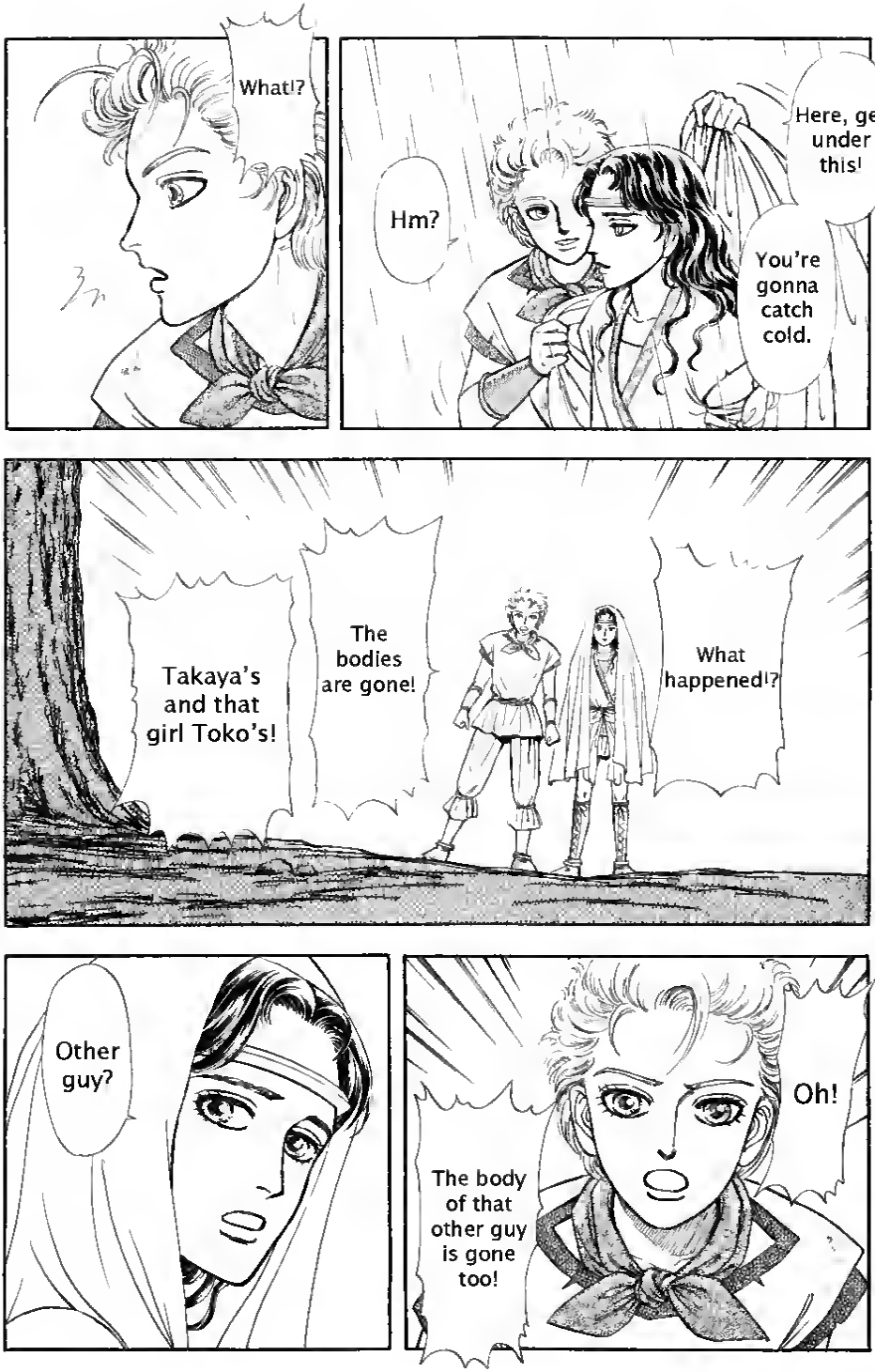
Under me, you can be
a free, beautiful fish.

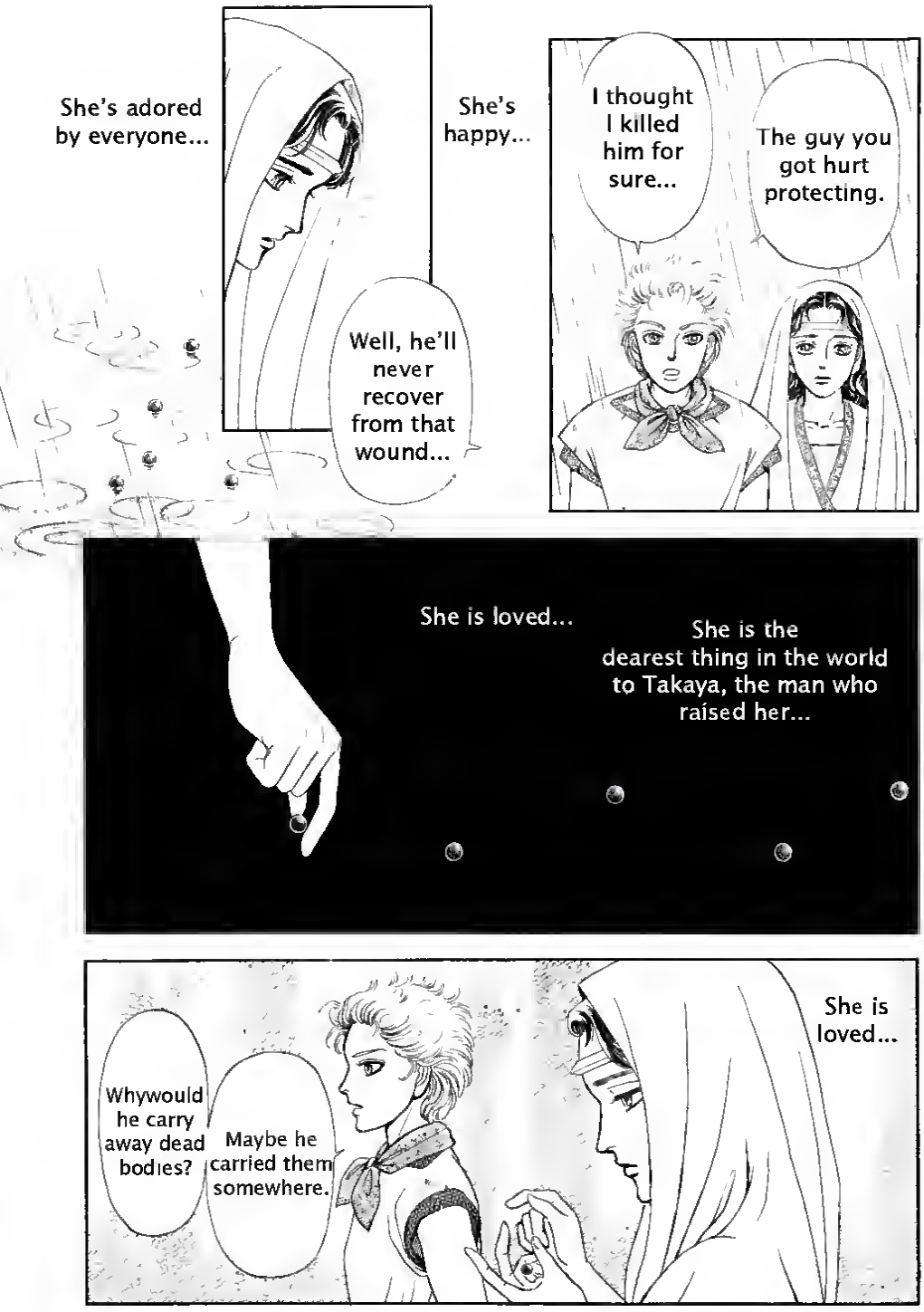
Corpses washed in the rain are eerily beautiful.
I mean, only on the day they die, but...
...they're lucky they died today.
Toko and... Takaya...
I've got to see them...

Don't follow me!
Yoko!?
I have to check!
Check what!?
SPLASH
SPLASH
SPLASH

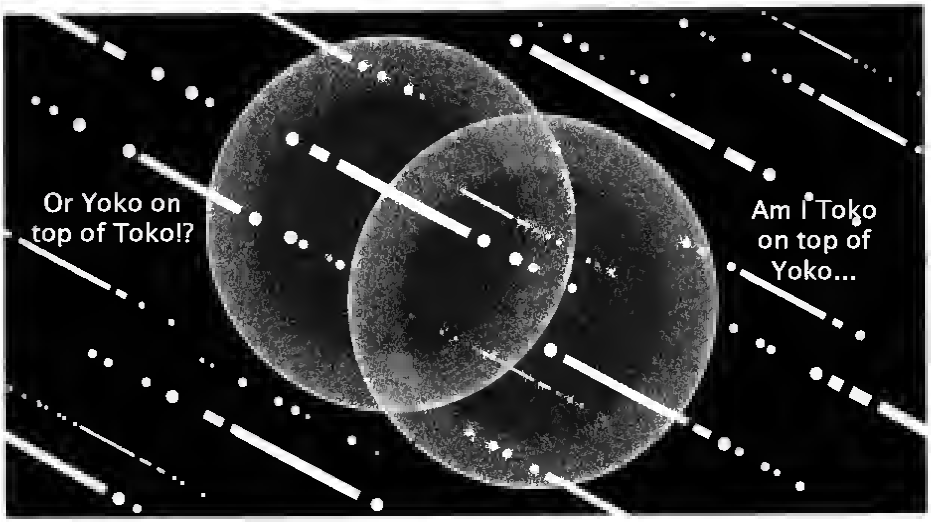
But I have to see them with my own eyes!
I don't know!
... something!
I have to check...
I can't go on like this!

...or even go crazy!
At this rate, I won't be able to cry or die...
SPLASH
SPLASH
PANT
PANT
PANT
Yoko!
You're really... fast...

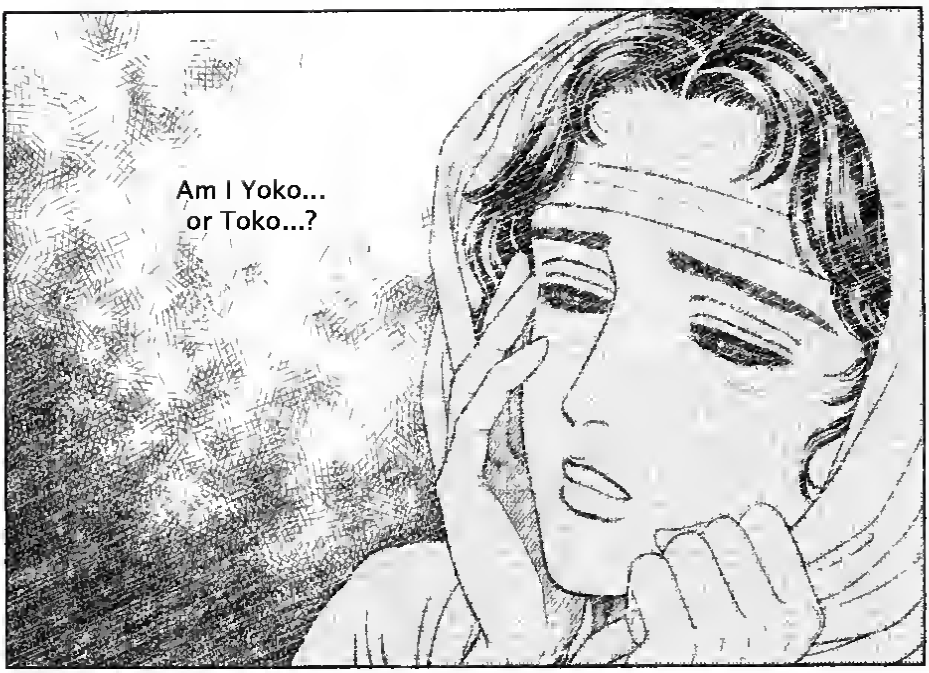

What!?
Hm?
Here, get under this!
You're gonna catch cold.
Takaya's and that girl Toko's!
The bodies are gone!
What happened!?
Other guy?
Oh!
The body of that other guy is gone too!


She's adored by everyone...
She's happy...
Well, he'll never recover from that wound...
I thought I killed him for sure...
The guy you got hurt protecting.
She is loved...
She is the dearest thing in the world to Takaya, the man who raised her...
Whywould he carry away dead bodies?
Maybe he carried them somewhere.
She is loved...

Toko lived a happy life...
I know...
We'll die together...
and reunite as one...
That way...
...your sorrow will become mine...
...and my happiness will become yours...

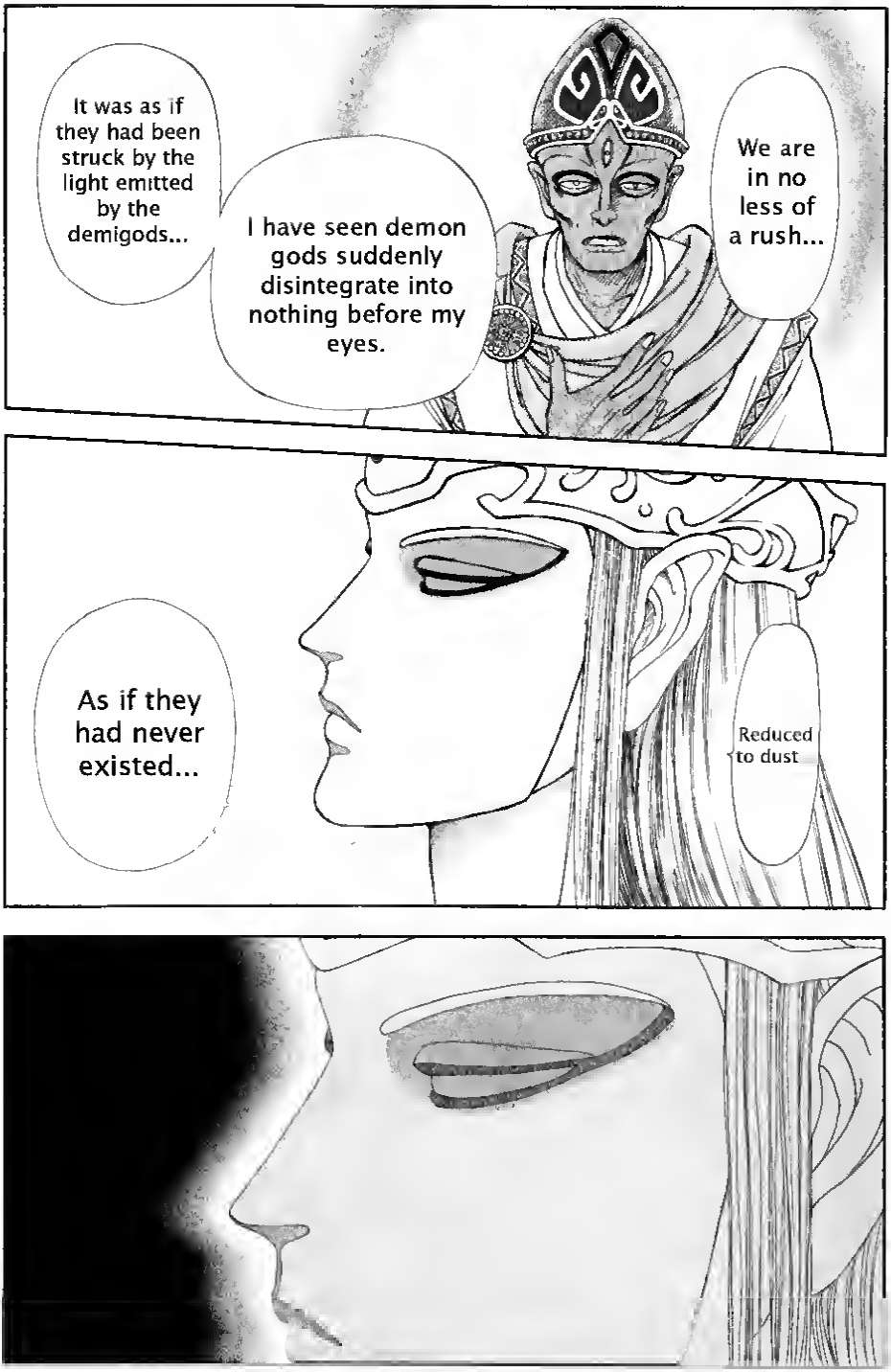


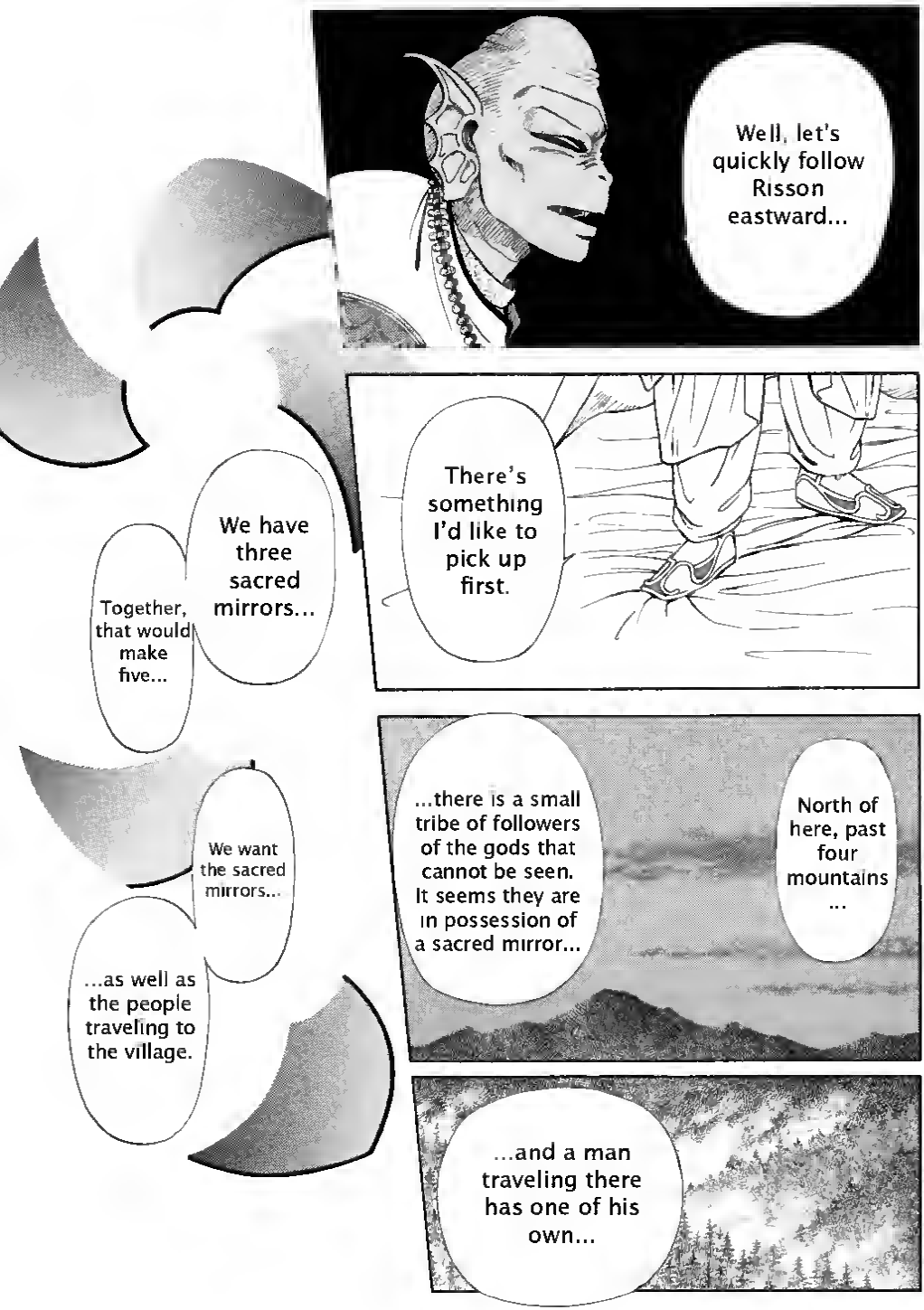
I don't know.



According to Nachi, Risson left on his own in search of the secrets of the gods that cannot be seen...
He was headed to Fuji, a sacred mountain in the east.
Did you pardon Nachi to find out where Risson is?
Execution was the only acceptable course of action...
...yet you've healed even his arrow wounds...
HE HE...
My true face collapsed long ago.
We can never tell what you're thinking or doing, Kiyu...
...any more than we can perceive your true expressions under that mask...

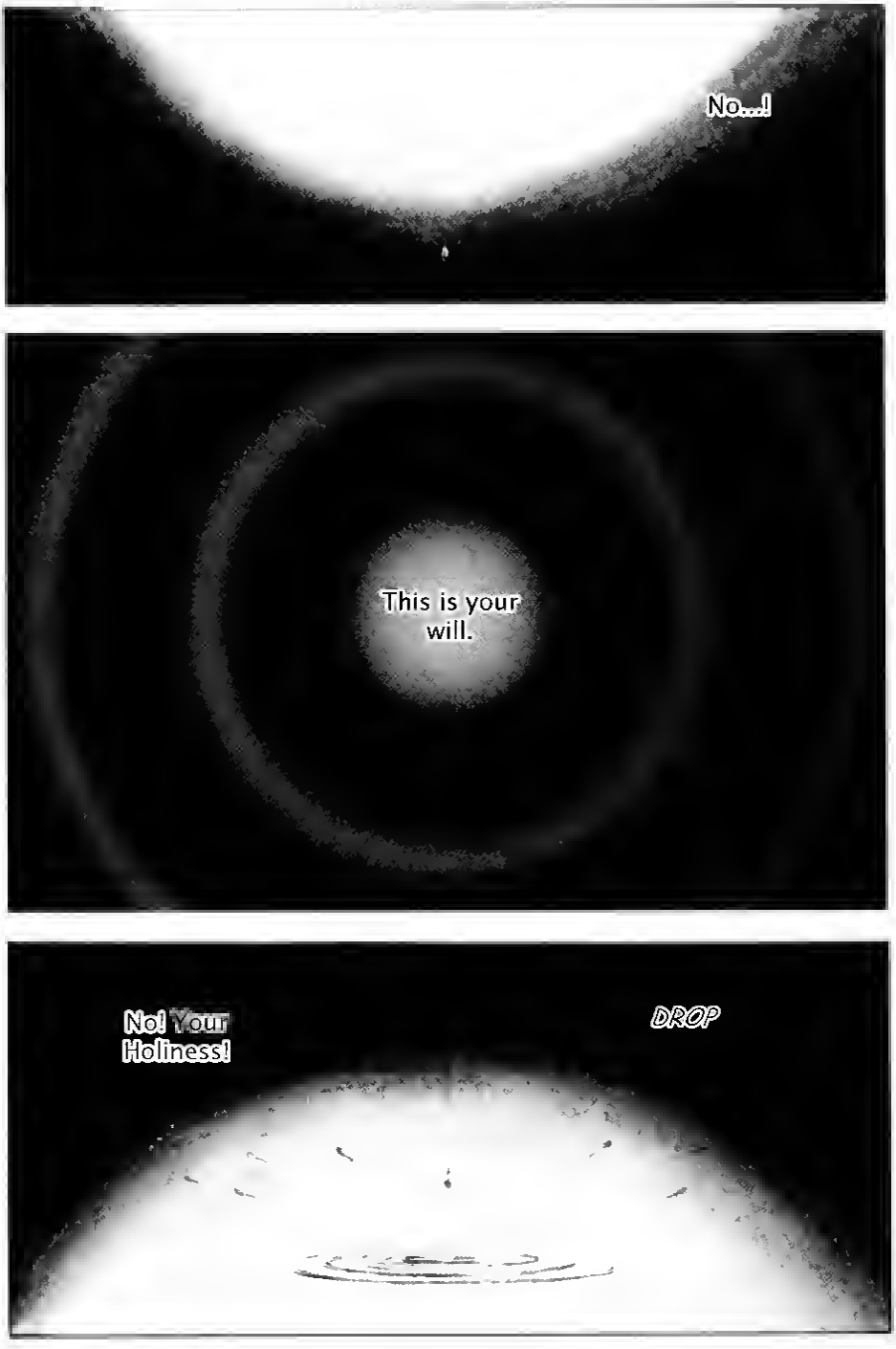
He has been using too much of his power.
Risson is the last god I would expect to leave his warriors, though.
...he must be in a rush...
If even we have a sense of urgency...
He too has realized we are not immortal beings.

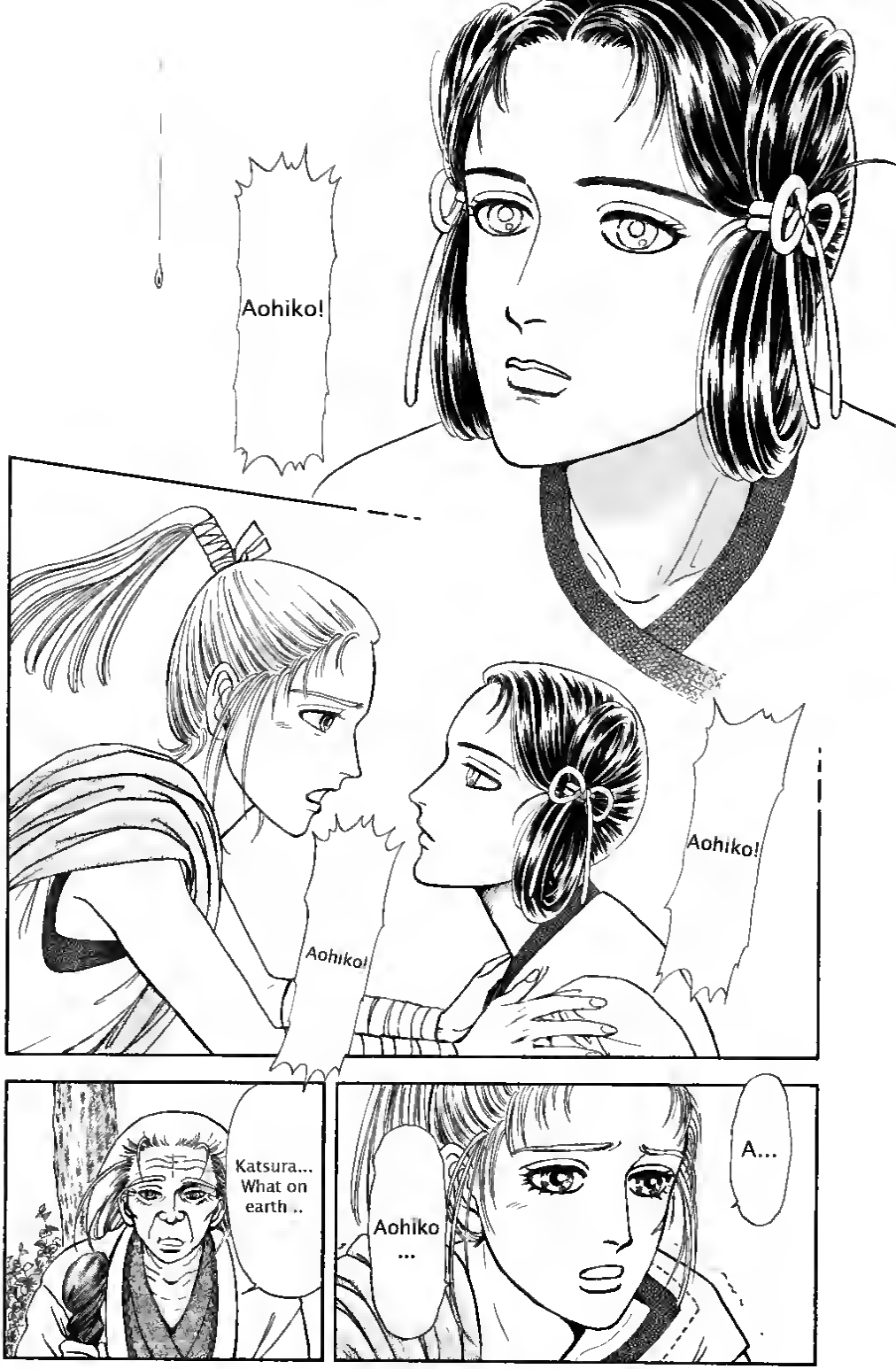

It was as if they had been struck by the light emitted by the demigods...
I have seen demon gods suddenly disintegrate into nothing before my eyes.
We are in no less of a rush...
As if they had never existed...
Reduced to dust


Well, let's quickly follow Risson eastward...
There's something I'd like to pick up first.
We have three sacred mirrors...
Together, that would make five...
We want the sacred mirrors...
...as well as the people traveling to the village.
...there is a small tribe of followers of the gods that cannot be seen. It seems they are in possession of a sacred mirror...
North of here, past four mountains ...
...and a man traveling there has one of his own...

DROP
...and a man named Aohiko with a perfect command of mantras...
A hermit named Misen with intimate knowledge of the gods that cannot be seen...
DRIP
It's finally let up.
Why are you staring at the raindrops ...?
Aohiko !?
What's up?
Let's go as far as we can before the sun sets!
The footing will be bad going down, but we're in a hurry.

Ao
...
Aohi-
ko!?
DRIP


No...!
This is your will.
No! Your Holiness!
DROP


Aohiko!
Aohiko!
Aohiko!
Katsura... What on earth ..
A...
Aohiko ...

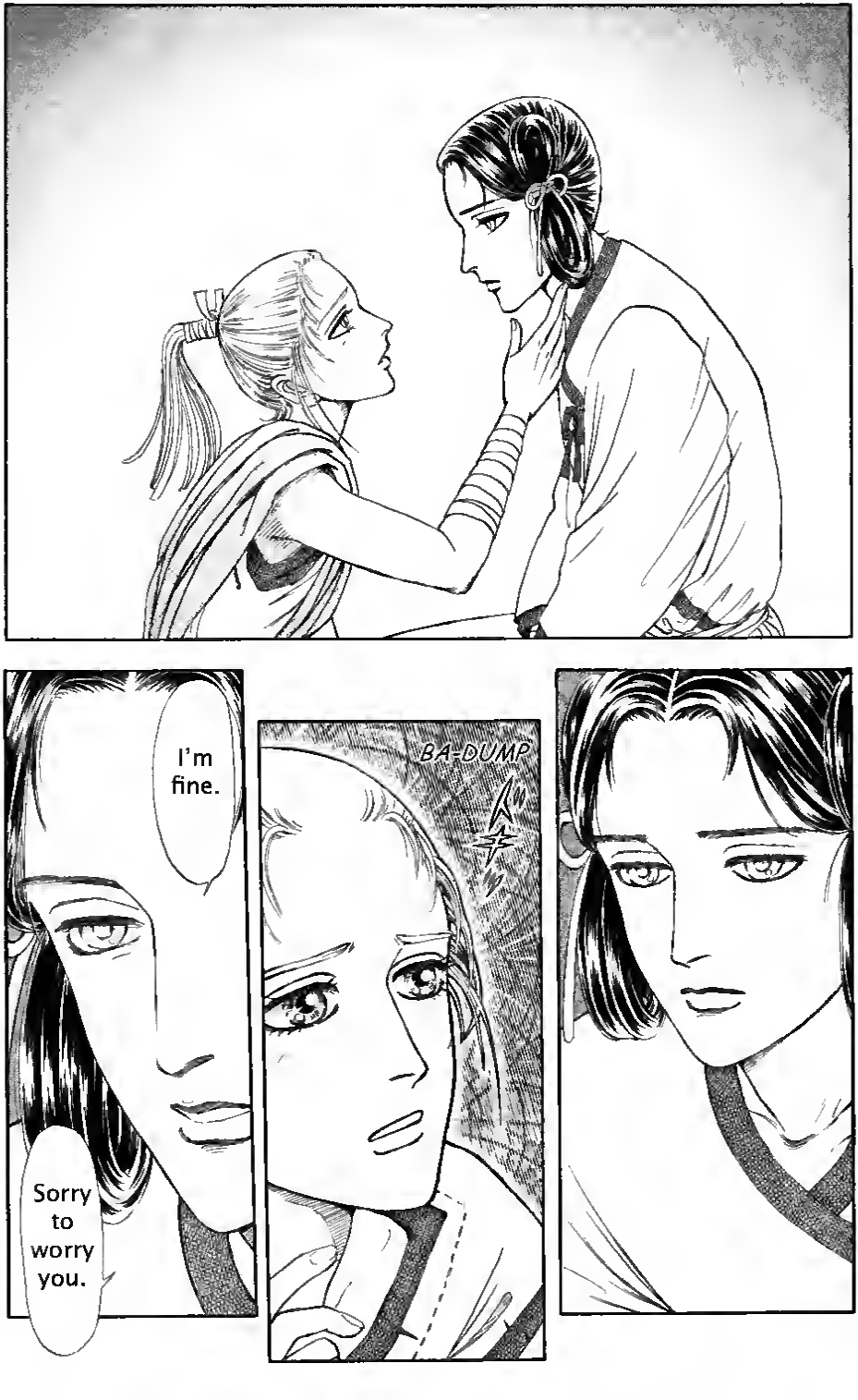
...that he'd soon have mental problems and lose his mind...
Aohiko said he was destined to become an invalid someday...
But ...
...why this sudden ...?
Right after a rain shower ...?
The raindrops probably called him away somewhere.
Like you say, it couldn't have happened after a rain shower.
Calm down, Katsura.
Aohiko!

Don't call me... Katsura!
The rain-drops?
Has this happened before?
No...
Never ...
The rain may be the key...
I see ...
Whenever you call me...
...I...
Aohiko!
Aohiko!

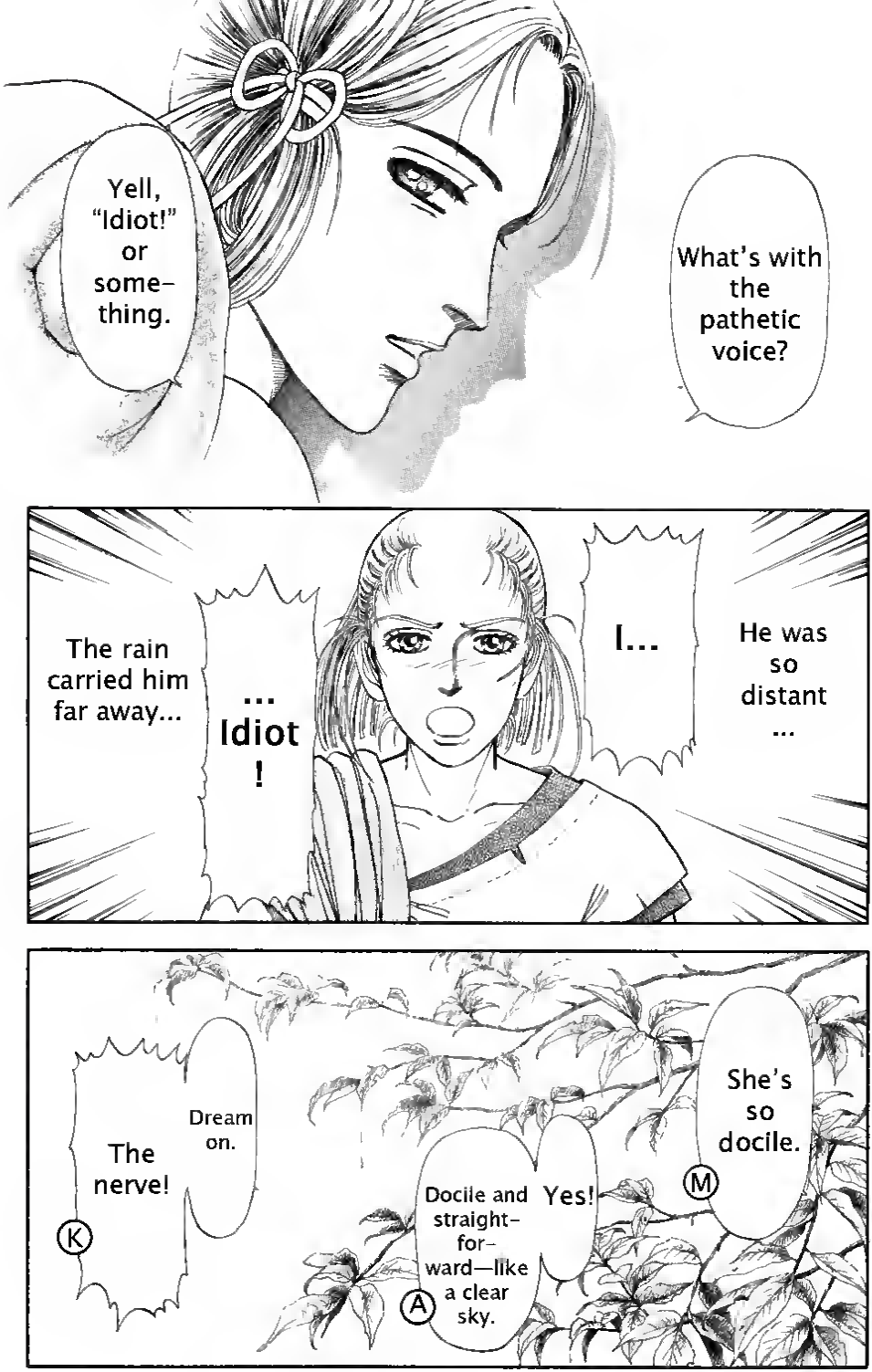
...to that day...
....I go back....
You will come with me...

...on a quest for the secrets of the gods that cannot be seen...
No!
This is your will.
No! Your Holiness!

No!
Your Holiness!


I'm fine.
Sorry to worry you.
BA-DUMP

Don't worry about me.
Everything's fine now— really.
Aohiko ...
Fine!? You're as pale as a ghost!
Aohiko!
Let's go!
Sorry. I wasted valuable time.

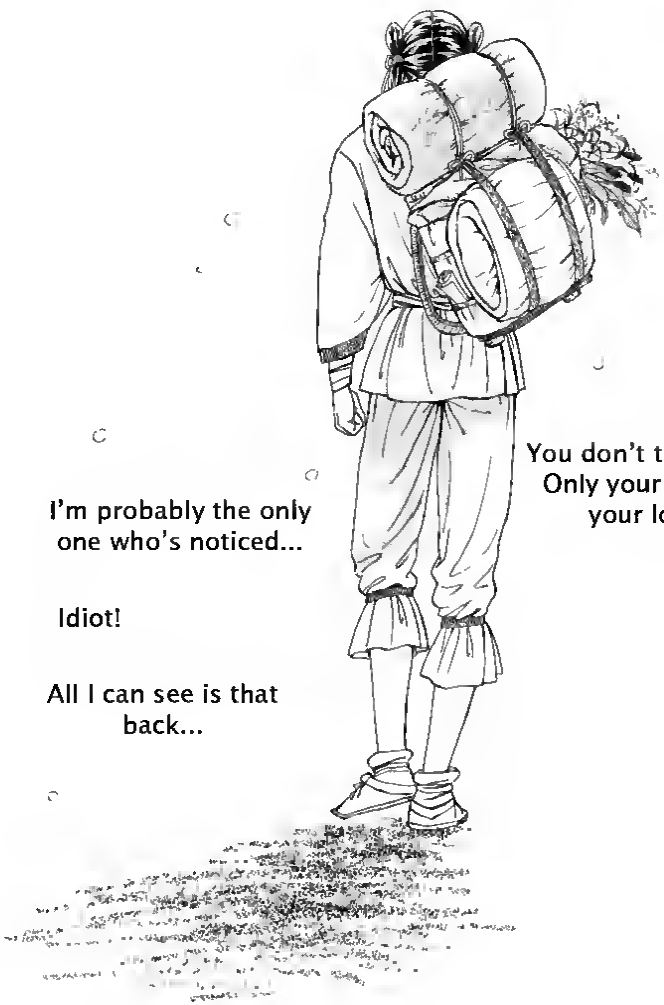

Yell, "Idiot!" or some-thing.
What's with the pathetic voice?
The rain carried him far away...
... Idiot !
I...
He was so distant ...
The nerve!
Dream on.
K
Docile and straight-for-ward—like a clear sky.
Yes!
A
She's so docile.
M

I get it, I get it!
Idiot idiot idiot idiot idiot idiot idiot idiot idiot idiot
Hey! I know I'm just a third wheel, but this wasn't the picture I had in mind GRUMBLE
You're right...
I didn't get it.
No you don't!
...when his eyes went blank...
It scared me...

He can't be okay...

His lonely back looks
even lonelier.

The last time he looked
at me with such sad eyes
was that moonlit night...

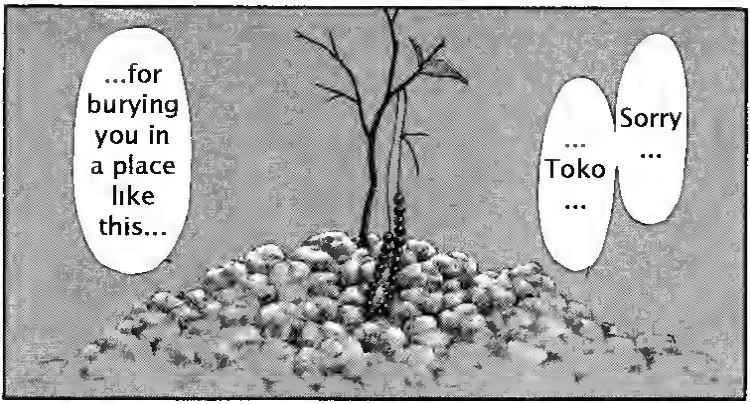


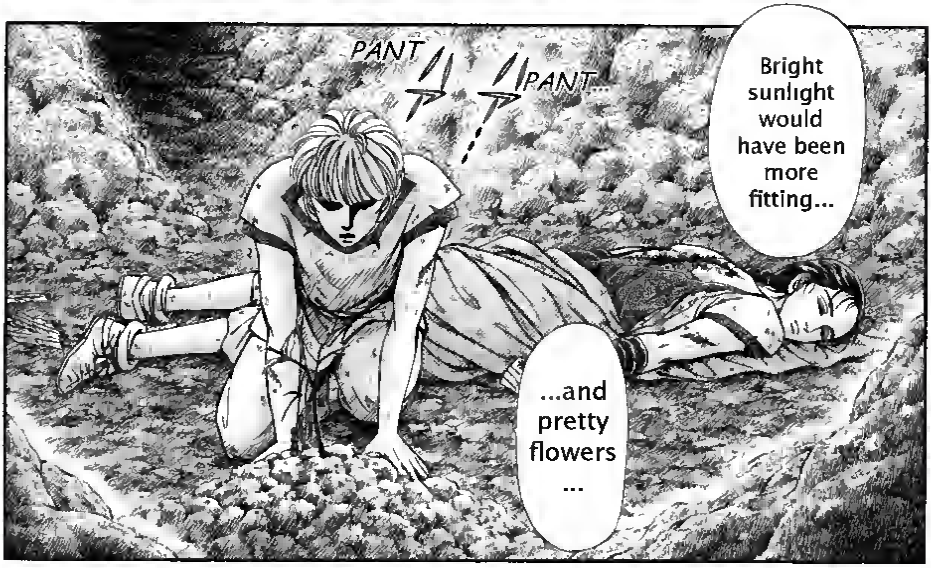
You don't tell me anything.
Only your back whispers
your loneliness...

I'm probably the only
one who's noticed...

Idiot!

All I can see is that
back...


...for burying you in a place like this...
... Toko ...
Sorry ...


PANT
PANT...
Bright sunlight would have been more fitting...
...and pretty flowers ...

PANT
The moss... emits a dim light...
...this place isn't bad...
But ...

I found it... earlier...
I wanted to... take you here some day...
TWITCH
Ta... Takaya!
You're alive!? Takaya!?
Takaya !?

Can you hear me!? Takaya!
I... can't ...
...I have to... tell you... now...
Even if you can't ...
...any... longer ...
... hold on ...
PANT...
...is her name... She's Toko's twin...
Yoko ...
It's about that girl...

...a good girl ...
She's ...
When I said yes...
She ... asked me ...
...if Toko was... happy...
...such... beautiful ... tears...
I... I'd never seen...
beautiful tears... ran down her face...

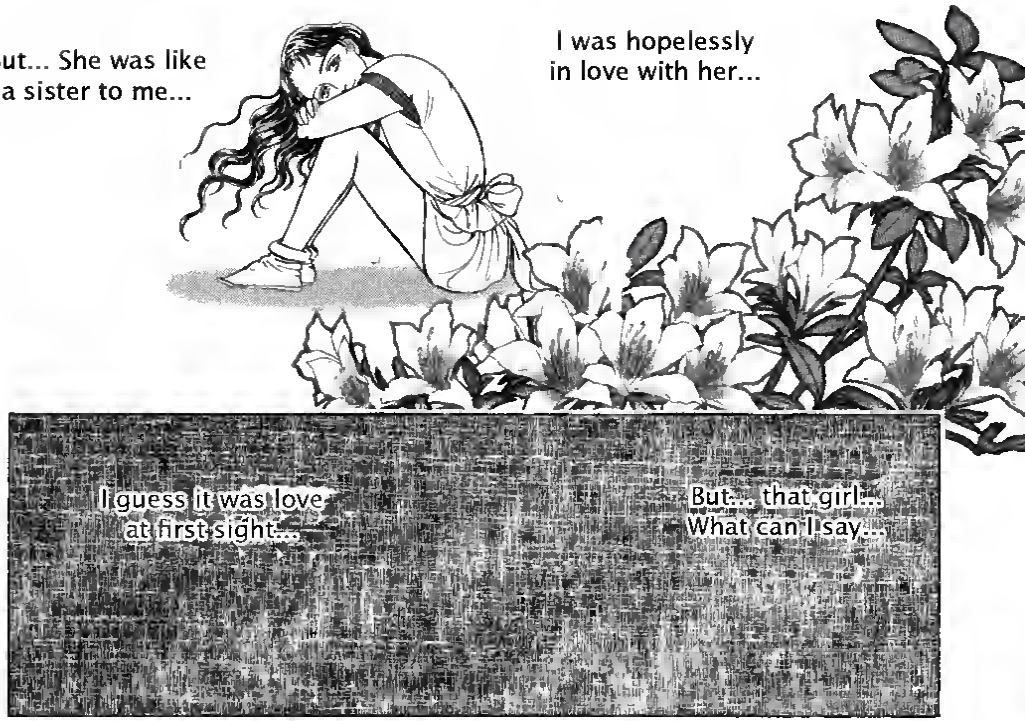
She...
got
hurt...
...pro-
tecting
me...
PANT...
PANT...
...killed
Toko, but it
was because
of the demon
headband...
She
...
Ouch
...
Ooh
that
hurts
...
STING...
Please
...
...save...
that...
girl...
You're
the
only...
one who
can...

It's my last... wish...
Takaya ...
Please ...
I guess it's ...
Please listen ...
Those wounds... would have killed me... three times over...
... useless ...

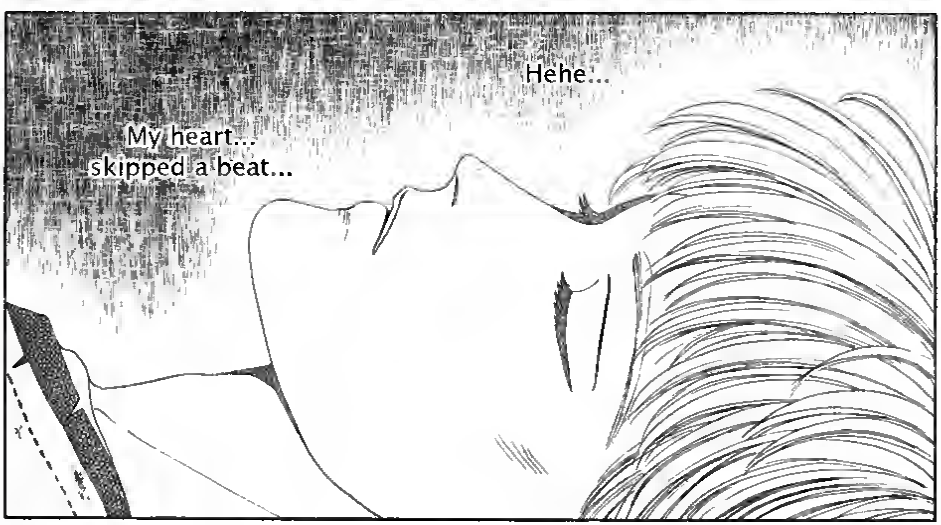
I think...
...it's a fine way to die...
Forget it...
Never mind ...
...were so beautiful...
Her... tears...

I loved...

...Toko...

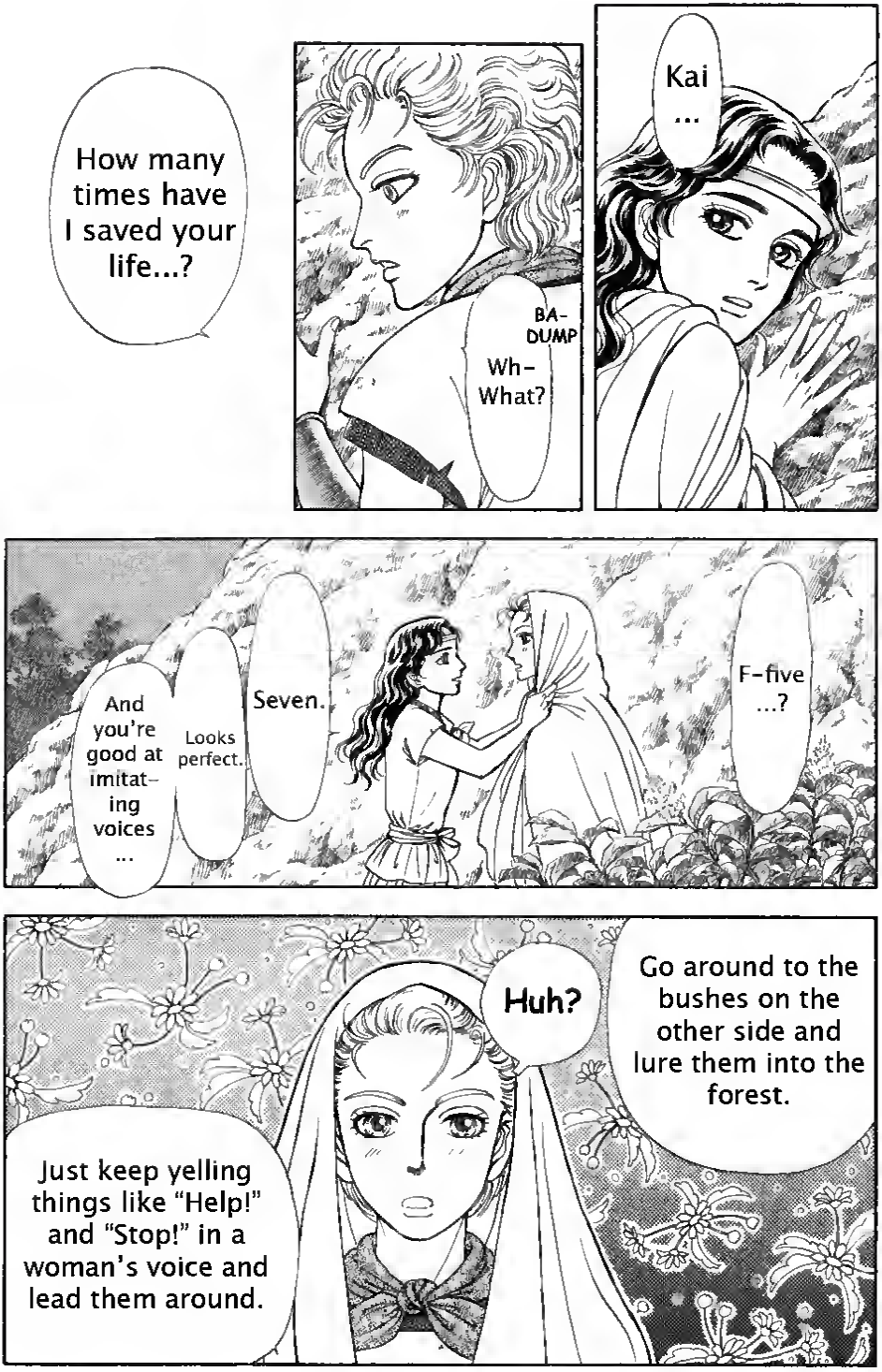

But... She was like a sister to me...
I was hopelessly in love with her...

I guess it was love at first sight...
But... that girl... What can I say...

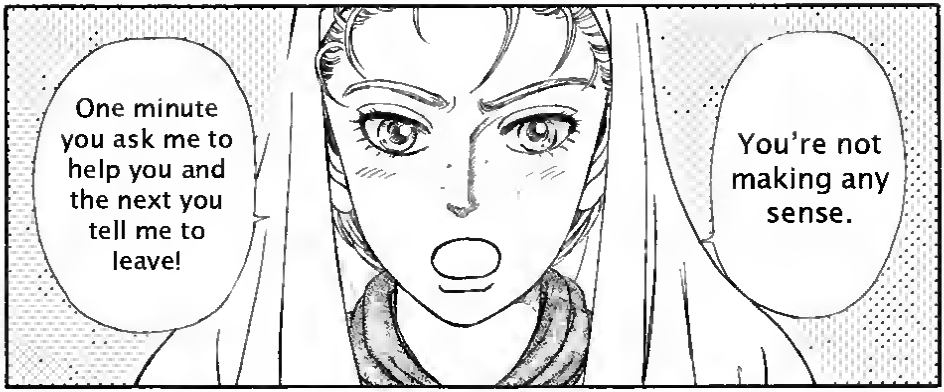

Hehe...
My heart... skipped a beat...

Skippe
d...
a...
beat...
Where are you going, Yoko!?
I told you not to follow me.

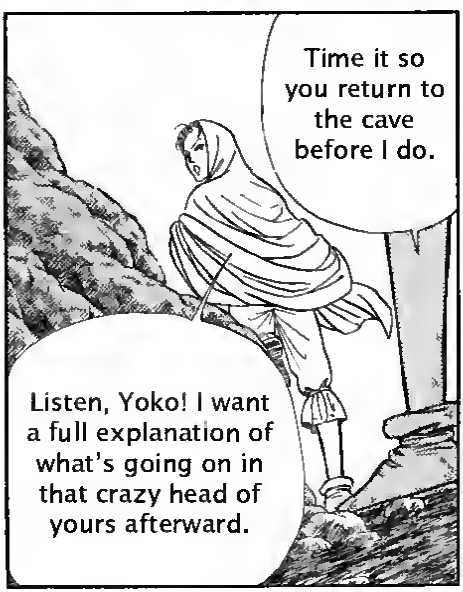
If you don't go back, I won't talk to you for the rest of my life.
Hmph! You're acting weird!
SHH
That's the prison ...
Yoko!
Are you out of your mind!?
It'd be easy to take them out but that would cause trouble later on.
Two guards ...
YAWN

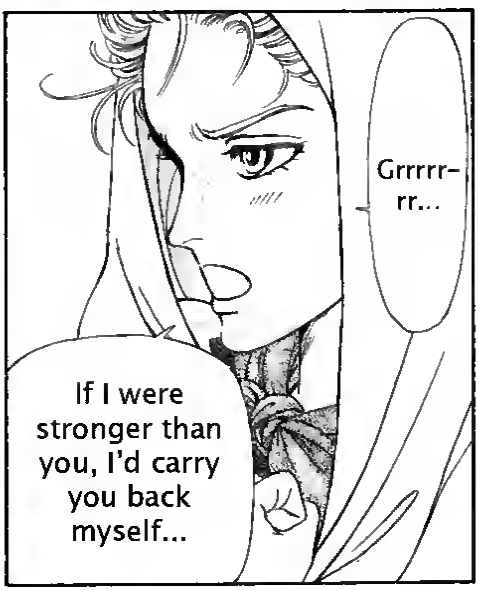

How many times have I saved your life...?
BA-DUMP
Wh-What?
Kai ...
And you're good at imitat-ing voices ...
Looks perfect.
Seven.
F-five ...?
Huh?
Go around to the bushes on the other side and lure them into the forest.
Just keep yelling things like "Help!" and "Stop!" in a woman's voice and lead them around.

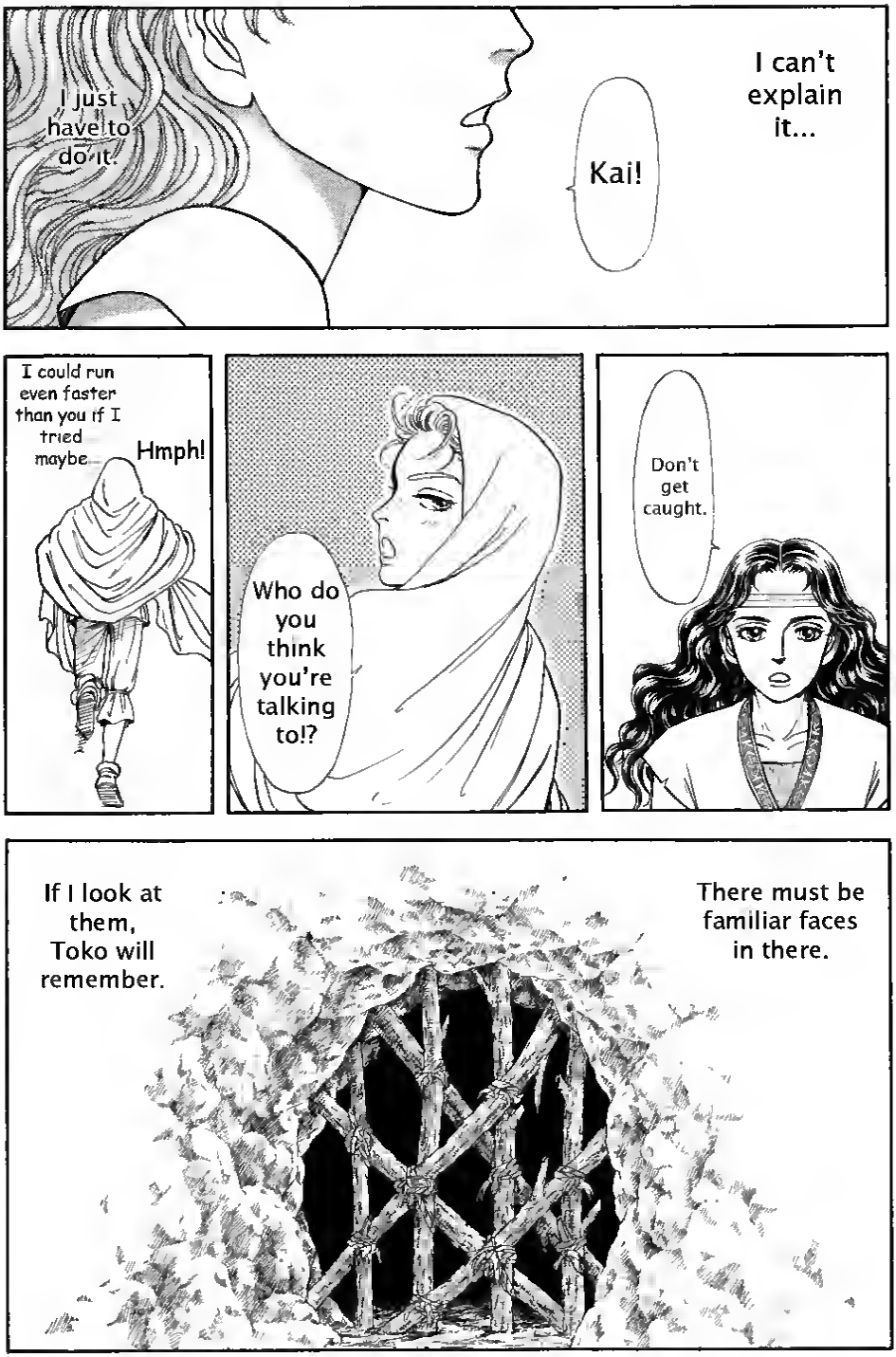
I just want to talk to them for a bit.
What are you going to do? Try to set Risson's warriors free!?
You ...
...died once and got your head all screwed up.
I can mana ge on my own!
If you're just going to whine, forget it! Get out of here.
Liar!
If that was all you wanted, you could just tell the guards.
If you don't want to be involved, leave!
You're probably right.
Yeah ...
...


One minute you ask me to help you and the next you tell me to leave!
You're not making any sense.

If you help me, no one will find out.
If they find out you betrayed them, we'll both be killed.
Don't you get it?


Time it so you return to the cave before I do.
Listen, Yoko! I want a full explanation of what's going on in that crazy head of yours afterward.

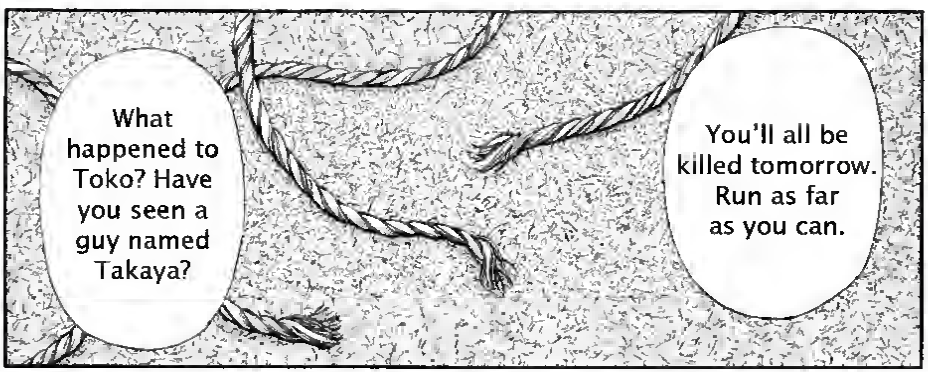

Grrrrr-rr...
If I were stronger than you, I'd carry you back myself...


I just have to do it.
Kai!
I can't explain it...
I could run even faster than you if I tried maybe.
Hmph!
Who do you think you're talking to!?
Don't get caught.
If I look at them, Toko will remember.
There must be familiar faces in there.

Why did I let that idiot talk me into this!?
いやぁ～ん
No-o!
Some-body help!
Hm?
Help!
きゃーっ!!
Eeek!
No fair!
きゃーっ
きゃーっ
Eeek!
Eeek!
He he ...
I'll go check it out!
Yeah, over here, you perverts...!
やめてぇ!!
いやーっ!!
Don't!
Stop!
DASH
DASH
DASH

Toko !?
Toko ?
To...
It's the Chief!
I know him!?

きゃーっ
Eeek!
Eeek!
きゃーっ
Are you Toko's twin?
The guards will be back soon.
Now's your chance.

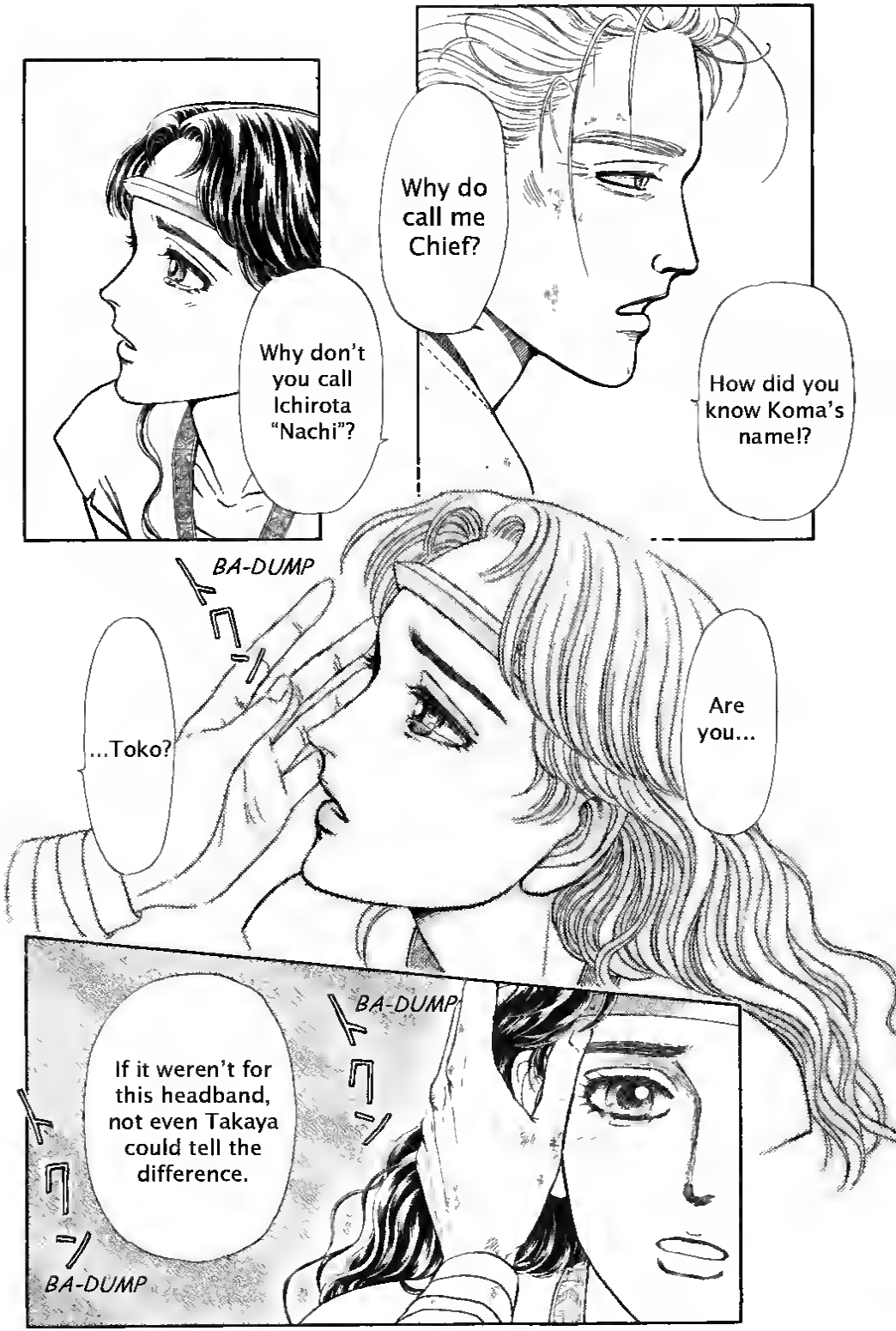

What happened to Toko? Have you seen a guy named Takaya?
You'll all be killed tomorrow. Run as far as you can.

Toko ...
... died.
I... ... killed her ...

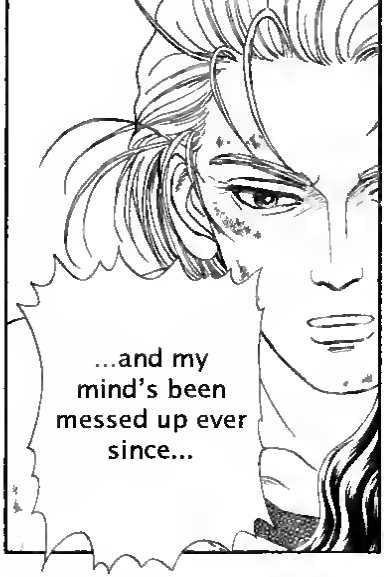
Taka-
ya
...
Wha
...
...
...was
also
fatally
woun-
ded.
He
died
!?
Taka-
ya!?
That
man!?
That man
seems
to have
carried them
somewhere.
I
don't
know.
Ko...
...ma...
Um
...

That's right! Koma!
Koma!
Get out of here, Chief!
Hurry!
So Koma's okay.
No, Koma was seriously wounded!

I can't leave Ichirota behind.
Go on now!
That's an order!
Just run as far as you can!
You guys go on ahead.
What about you?
Chief!
...
He's completely under Kiyu's control by now.
Ichirota is beyond hope.
Go with them, Chief!

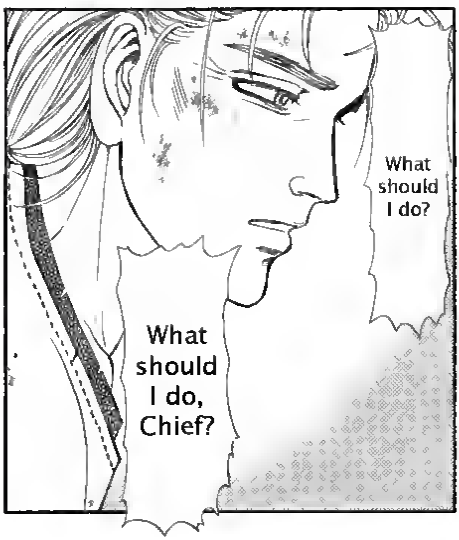

Why do call me Chief?
How did you know Koma's name!?
Why don't you call Ichirota "Nachi"?
BA-DUMP
...Toko?
Are you...
BA-DUMP
If it weren't for this headband, not even Takaya could tell the difference.
BA-DUMP

...Toko?
Are you...
Ahh ...
Ahh ...
I don't know if I'm Yoko or Toko.
Help me, Chief!



I remember Yoko's memories in more detail...

But my mind races with fragments of memories more powerful than all of Yoko's combined...

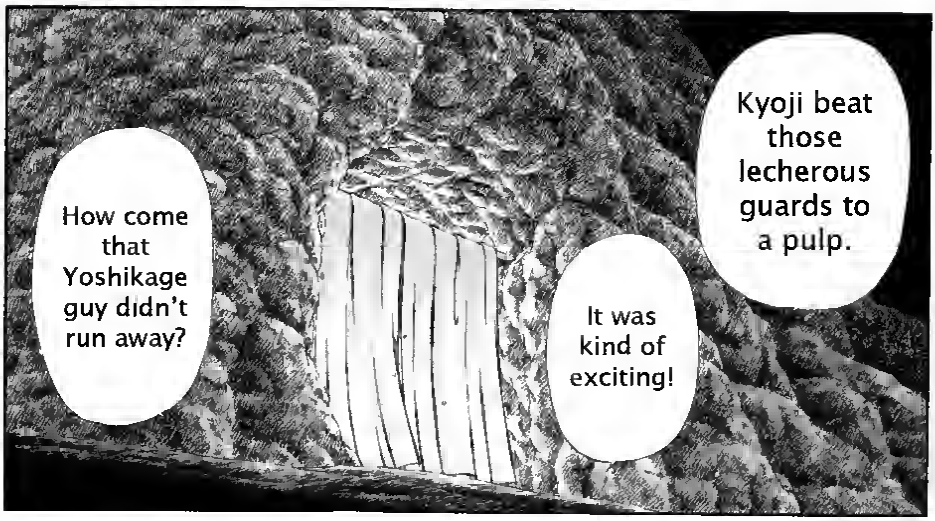


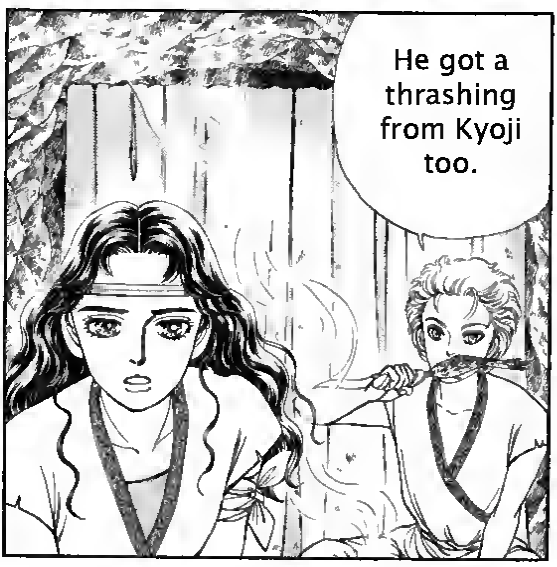
I wonder if...
...Toko's soul is inside you...
Who else do you remember?
Who else?
A... Aohiko ...
... and ...
... Kasu-ra...

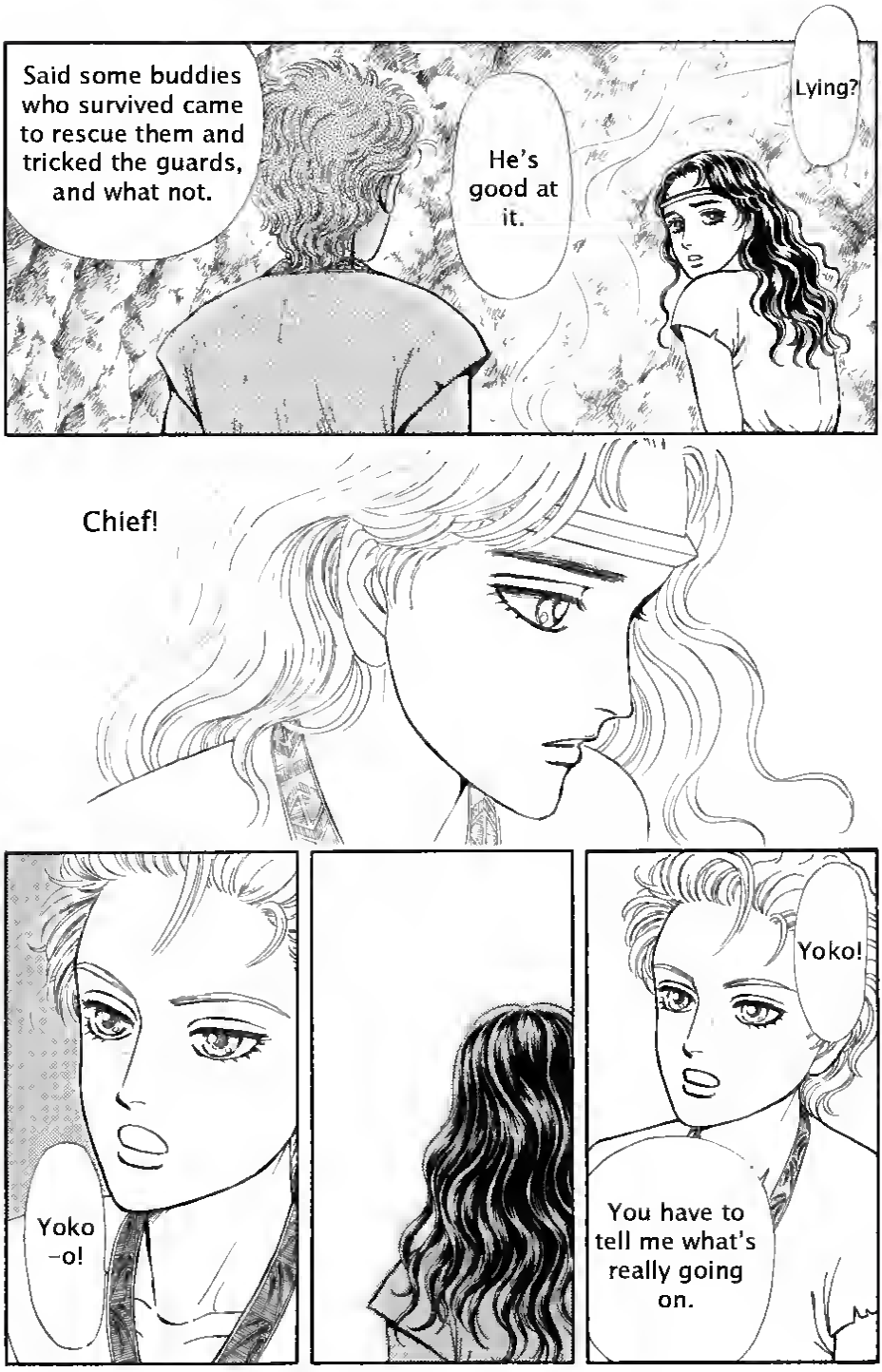
Go find Takaya! The name he calls you is your name.
Takaya!
He's the only person who would know whether you're Toko or Yoko.
And find Aohiko. He might know what happened to you...
You're ...
...planning to die!
Chief!
Sorry, but that's all I can do for you.

Go!
Takaya is alive—I'm sure of it!
You must not die!
Go now!
Chief!
If Toko is inside you, she'll follow my orders.
...is a good girl.
Toko ...

What a commo-tion.



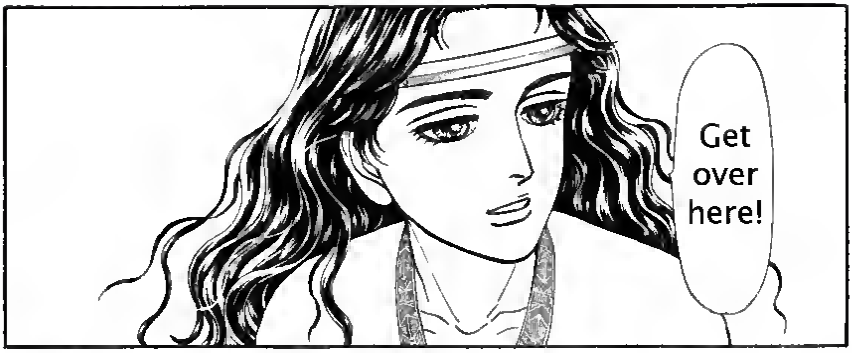


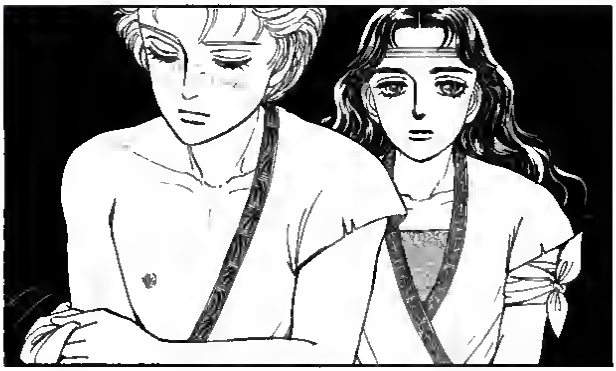

Said some buddies who survived came to rescue them and tricked the guards, and what not.
He's good at it.
Lying?
Chief!
Yoko -o!
Yoko!
You have to tell me what's really going on.

Now you've made me mad!
What?
I don't want to team up with you anymore.
I'll give the Captain a good excuse tomorrow.
...but I can't let you get any more involved!
Be as mad as you like...
Kai!
I'm going to tell the Captain what you did today.
Go ahead!

Let's ...
...die toge-ther!
No! Not with you!
Go to sleep!
Ouch ...
Oww ...

I'm fine!
Kai.
It'll settle down soon.
It's the usual...
I'm fine!
Huh...?
Come here.
I'll rub it.


Get over here!

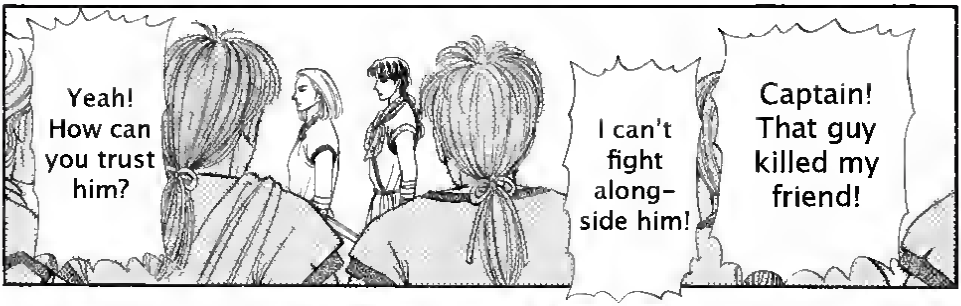


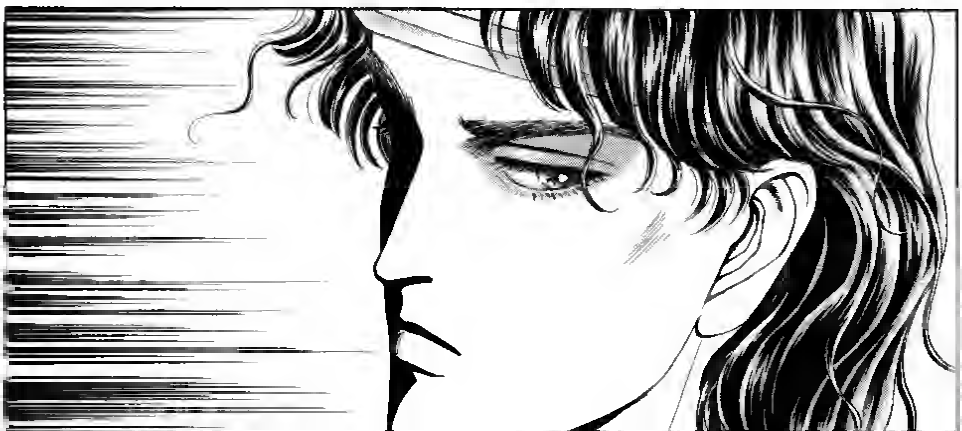
You have a magic touch...
It takes the pain away ...
STROKE...
I'm like an animal...
When you lick my wounds, they heal much faster...
Your tongue s like that, Kai...
Does it hurt under your neck?
You might as well grow it out...
It hurts because you cut part of it off, right?
I hate it!
It's so ugly!

Thanks to this mane, I've always been shunned.
It's pretty ...
It looks like red flames...
Your mane is pretty, Kai...
I miss him...

...really are crazy.
You ...
I miss him.
Yeah ...
I miss him...
I miss him!

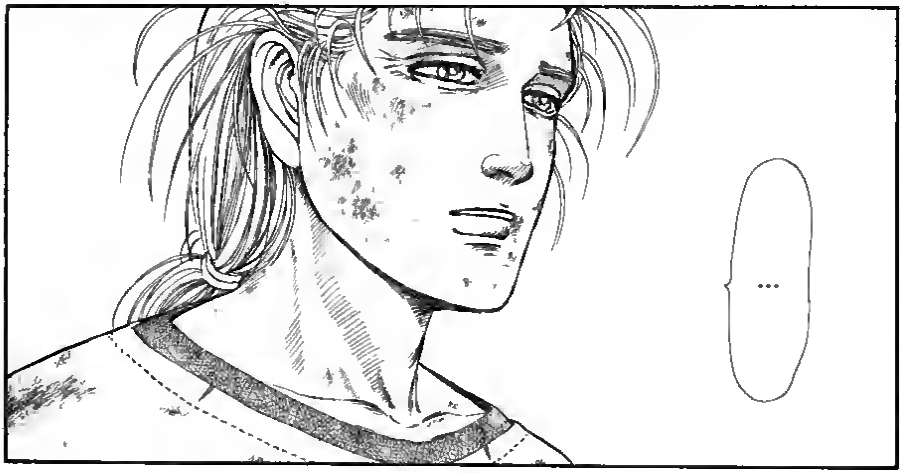
BUZZ
Ohh!
You've got to be kidding.
I heard Kiyu even healed his arrow wounds.
H-hey! Look at his forehead!

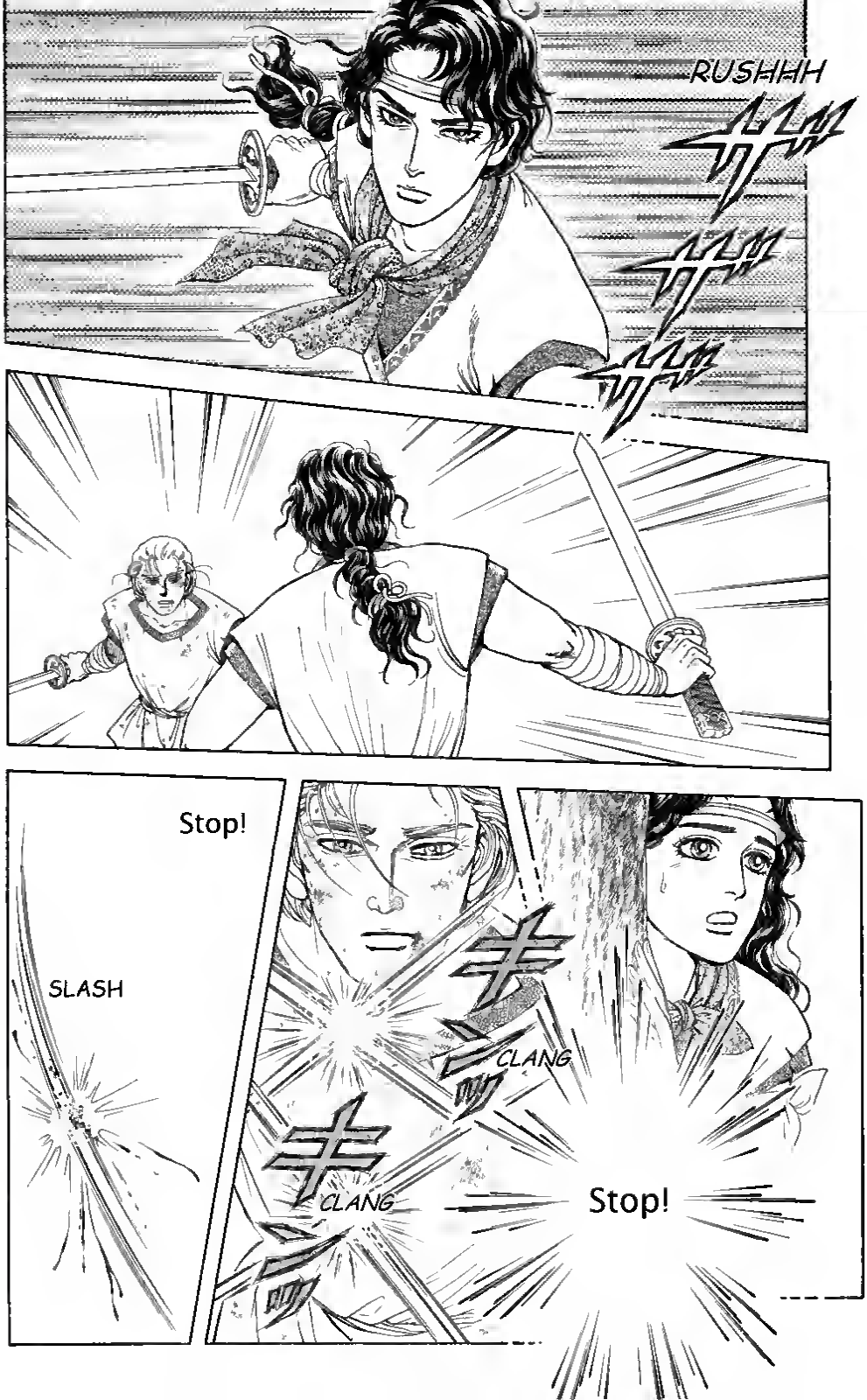

Yeah! How can you trust him?
I can't fight along-side him!
Captain! That guy killed my friend!



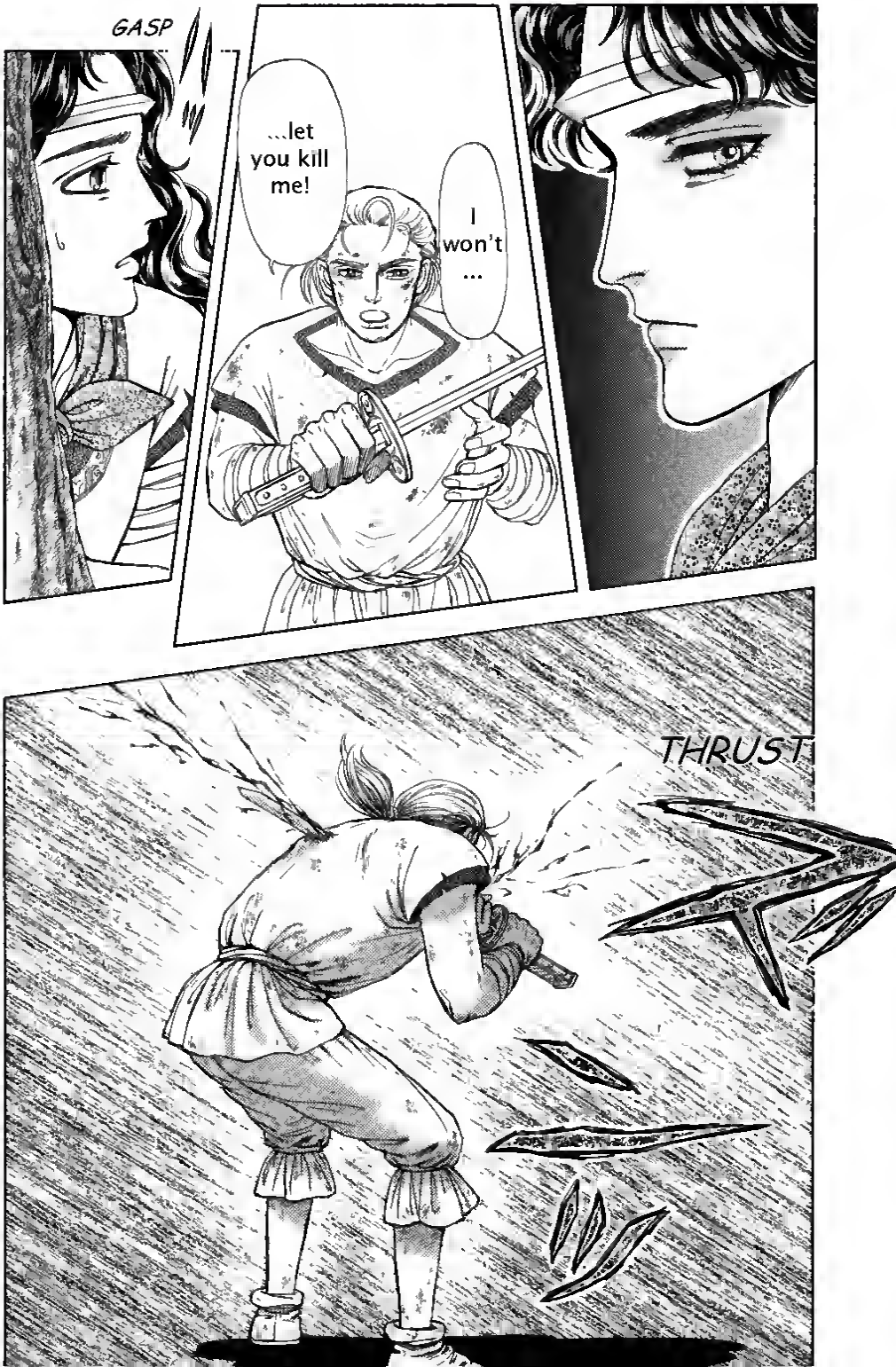
I'm happy to have Nachi. You're all aware of his skill.
GULP
Ichirota...
Yoko -o...
Don't do anything crazy.
Here he is, Captain!
Nachi! We'll have you kill one of the prisoners with your sword!
It will help convince everyone.

Chief!
Ichirota ...
Ironic, isn't it, Yoshi-kage?
To die at the hand of the person...
...you stayed behind for...
It would be boring to just slay him!
Give him a sword too!

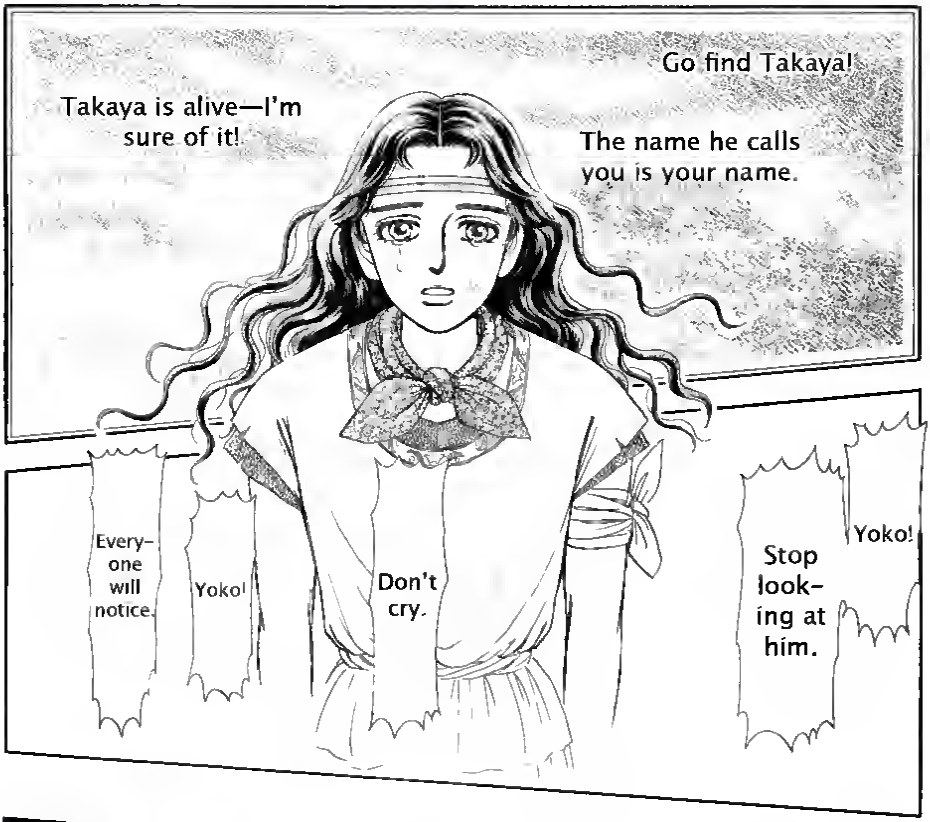



RUSHHH
Stop!
SLASH
CLANG
CLANG
Stop!

Ooh!
Ichirota!
That wound is proof I believed in you to the end!
The scar will never disappear!
Talk all you want! Can't you see his demon headband?


GASP
...let you kill me!
I won't ...
THRUST

Chief!
THUD
You mustn't die!
Ahh ...
What do you think you're doing!?
You want to die too!?
Ahh!
Stop! Yoko!

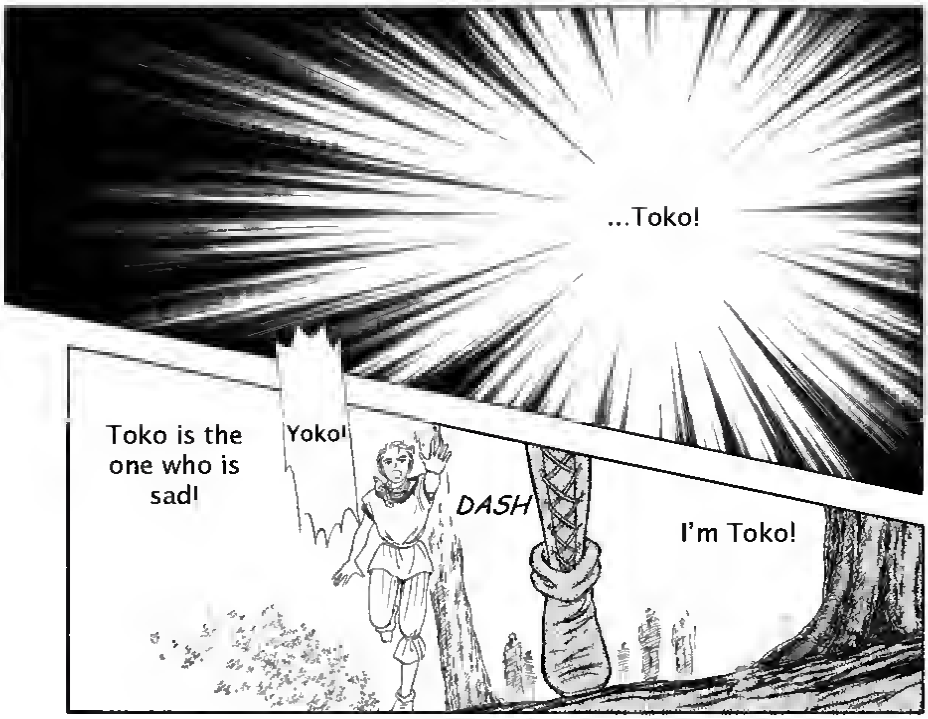

Takaya is alive—I'm sure of it!
Go find Takaya!
The name he calls you is your name.
Every-one will notice.
Yoko!
Don't cry.
Stop look-ing at him.
Yoko!

I'm...

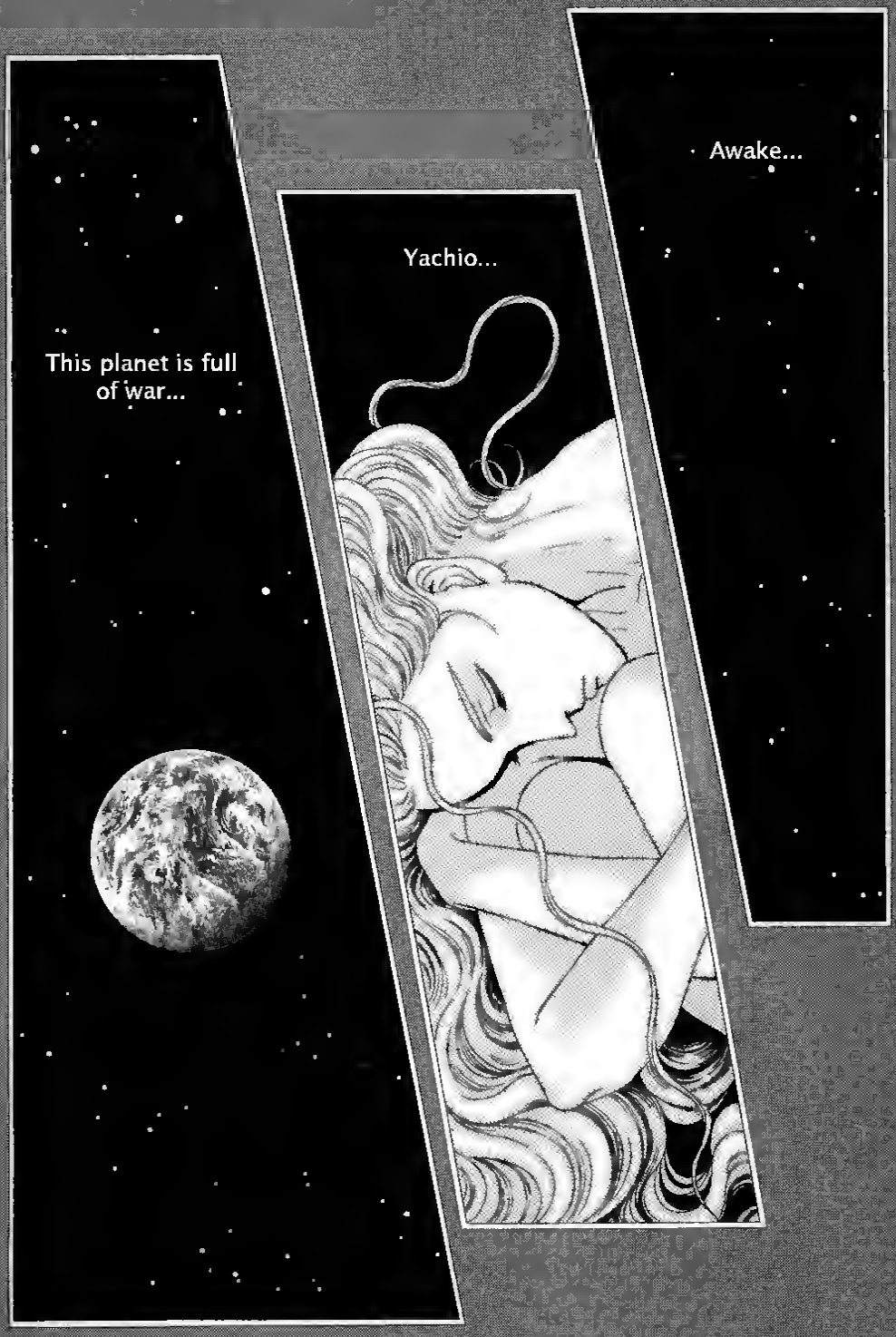
Are you...

...Toko?

Can you hear me?
No...!
Yoko!


...Toko!
Toko is the one who is sad!
Yoko!
DASH
I'm Toko!

Toko is the one who is crying!
Toko is the one who misses Takaya!


This planet is full of war...
Yachio...
Awake...

...The time has come

Awake, Yachio

...To be continued

Itihasa 4

Author
Wakako Mizuki

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First e-book edition-December 2015

Publisher
Creek & River Co., Ltd
C&R Group Bldg.,
2-10-9, Kojimachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo Japan 102-0083

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